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SHE HARDLY SPOKE TO US ON THE CAMPUS AT FIRST

MAY IVERSON TACKLES LIFE

BY

ELIZABETH JORDAN

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"MAY IVERSON — HER BOOK"
"TALES OF THE CLOISTER"
"MANY KINGDOMS"
ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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FOREWORD

In answer to many letters received during the serial publication of this book, I wish to say that the convent of St. Catharine's has no existence in fact. Its great walled garden, and the wide main hall, "with countless little music rooms opening off it," are features of the convent from which I graduated many years ago. The river, however, to which reference is so often made, flows through the grounds of a convent in another State, where I have spent my happiest hours; and the mound and the shrines are in the grounds of a third great convent in which my sister was a pupil.

Of the girls, Mabel Blossom and May Iverson herself are the only ones drawn from life—as clearly as one can draw who must look at her models through the mists of more than twenty years. To-day Mabel Blossom's children, their mother writes me, "know May Iverson by heart."

In describing the nuns no effort, of course, was made to portray individuals, except in one in-

stance. In writing of Sister Irmingarde, I have tried, how vainly I sadly realize, to convey an impression of the personality and influence of the most inspiring teacher and the most wonderful woman I have ever known—the late Sister Mary Rita, of the Order of the Holy Cross. To her imperishable memory I dedicate this book—the last I shall write on convent life.

ELIZABETH JORDAN.

MAY IVERSON TACKLES LIFE

MAY IVERSON TACKLES LIFE

I

WOMAN SUFFRAGE AT ST. CATHARINE'S

I MAY as well admit at once that Maudie Joyce was the first girl at St. Catharine's to feel any real interest in Woman Suffrage. Usually I am the one in our school set who thinks of new things, and does them; so the other girls have got in the habit of waiting for me, and not trying to think themselves, in their crude, immature way. But Maudie thought of suffrage all alone, though perhaps Kittie James helped to put the idea into her head.

You see, Kittie started an anti-suffrage club, almost as soon as we got back to school in September, and she made herself the president of it at the very first meeting. Before the meeting

was over, Maudie Joyce asked Kittie what the club was for, and Kittie didn't know; and Maudie asked what the members were going to do, and Kittie didn't know that, either. Kittie said she just wanted to have a club because they had one in Chicago, and her sister, Mrs. George Morgan, belonged to it. She said the nicest feature of the Chicago club was that nobody in it did anything, and they joined because they didn't have to do anything. It was a beautiful club, Kittie said, and so restful.

Maudie walked off to a corner after these words fell from the lips of our young friend, and I followed her. I suppose we looked aloof and lonely and disapproving. Anyway, when the rest of the girls had watched us a while, most of them came over to the corner, too, and the end of it all was that Kittie only got three members for her new club. Mabel Muriel Murphy joined because Sister Edna, the nun she likes best, approves of gentle, womanly girls. Kittie told Mabel the gentlest and most womanly thing a girl could possibly do was to join her anti-suffrage club. Kittie said the real aim of her club was to keep women in their homes, where they belonged, when they weren't at her club; and she said Mabel Muriel Murphy wouldn't have to have a single new idea all the time she belonged.

Mabel said afterward it was true, too; she didn't have any.

But the whole thing seemed silly to Maudie and me. We are very intelligent girls, if we are only sixteen, and we have lots of mature ideas and emotions. If we join a club at all, we want to do something in it, even if it is only to eat. There weren't going to be any "spreads" in Kittie's club, she said at first, because she has a delicate stomach, and the convent infirmarians, who look after her, think she mustn't eat between meals. They don't let her eat much at meals, either, so Kittie is against girls overeating. It *is* an awful thing to behold, when you are held down yourself.

However, Kittie went right on with her club, though, of course, she felt dreadfully disappointed when Maudie and I didn't join. Well, indeed, did she know what that meant, and how impossible real success was without us. So she "strengthened her party," as papa says great statesmen do, by giving offices to her friends. She made Mabel Muriel Murphy treasurer, because Mabel Muriel's father is rich and loves to pay bills; and she made Adeline Thurston secretary, because Adeline likes to write poems, and Kittie said writing reports of her club would be even more interesting than poetry. When

Maudie asked how there could be any reports if there wasn't anything done, Kittie said the club would write up the things that were not done. Then she looked past the sides of our faces and changed the subject by making Hattie Gregory vice-president.

We left the meeting after that, and went to my room and ate pickles and talked about how sharper than a serpent's tooth an ungrateful child is. Kittie was 'most like our own child, for she is more than a year younger than we are, and not intellectual; and Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce and I have really directed her education since she came to St. Catharine's, three years ago.

While we were talking, Maudie said she wondered what Mabel Blossom would think of all this. Mabel hadn't come back to school yet, but she was coming in a few days. Before I could answer, Maudie spoke again, in the quick way she has when she thinks of something. It's just as if some one had touched a button in her brain, and often Maudie jumps when it happens. She jumped this time, and so did I, for I wasn't expecting her to, and the doctor says I am a nervous girl, singularly high-strung. Besides, of course, I have the artistic temperament, and you know what that does to folks. So I jumped, and then

got cross over it, the way any literary artist would, who likes to be "well poised and dignified," as Sister Edna says. Maudie Joyce didn't even apologize. She just sat staring in front of her for a minute, as if she saw something that wasn't there. Then she said, very slowly:

"May Iverson, let's be suffragettes!"

I jumped again, because the idea surprised me so much, and I said:

"But we aren't suffragettes, so how can we be?"

Maudie looked at me with a patient expression, like the one Sister Irmingarde wears sometimes in the class-room. I analyzed it once, for literary practice, to help me to observe life and put down all I see: it had astonishment in it, and pained regret, and resignation, and a kind of holy calm, struggling up through hopelessness. After I analyzed it, I wrote it all out and showed the paper to Sister Irmingarde, and asked her if I was right. She looked very much surprised at first, but finally she said she thought I had every ingredient right but one, and she would let me guess at that. Then she smiled her lovely smile, and changed the subject by asking me why my marks weren't higher in algebra. Of course all this hasn't anything to do with suffrage, or anti-suffrage, either. I just put it in to show how acute I am, so the

gentle reader won't be surprised when I read people's hearts the way I'll have to before I get through with this chapter.

We will now return to Maudie. For a long time she was silent, and thought gathered deeply on her beautiful, high-bred face. At last she said, very solemnly:

"We are, too, suffragettes. We've been suffragettes right along, May Iverson. Only we haven't known it."

I gasped then, and began to say I couldn't be anything like that without knowing it, for my first lesson in life had been to know myself, and I learned it when I was twelve. But Maudie went right on, rudely interrupting me. She said she hadn't known her own heart till she went to Kittie's meeting and heard Kittie talk. She said all the time she was there she kept feeling more and more uncomfortable and stirred up inside, but she did'nt know why. She even thought it might be indigestion. She said it was only this minute that it burst upon her gloriously that from the very beginning of Kittie's meeting she had been a suffragette, unconsciously working for the cause, and trying to get independence of thought for women. She added that when she heard Kittie James express her silly little ideas, they made her so annoyed that she 'most wanted

to slap Kittie. Then she woke up and knew she was a real suffragette, because that's the way they feel in England. She read all about it in the newspapers, and a friend of her mother had seen Mrs. Pankhurst in Chicago.

By this time Maudie was very much excited, so when I didn't answer right off she said she was ready to die for the cause, and if I didn't feel that way, too, and join the suffrage club she was going to get up, she'd never speak to me again as long as she lived.

Of course that's no way to talk to the daughter of a general in the army, who is a literary artist besides, and I pointed this out to Maudie in tones that were cold and firm. I said she couldn't force me to anything by threats, but that she must appeal to my reason and convince me that suffrage was a good thing for women. And I added, frankly, that I didn't think she could do it now, anyway, because she had annoyed me very much by the way she began. I was 'most sure already I wasn't a suffragette and didn't ever want to be one.

Maudie changed her methods then, right off. She has associated with Mabel and me so long that she has a good deal of sense. She begged my pardon very politely, and she fixed me in a big, comfy chair, and gave me a glass of ginger

ale and a cookie, and started in to appeal to my reason.

She said, with her first words, that she was glad to have *my* reason to appeal to, and not the other girls', and she asked me to imagine how I'd feel if I ever had to appeal to Kittie James's reason. When I clapped at that, like a real audience—for any one who knew Kittie could see what a powerful point it was—Maudie asked me if I was willing to follow the banner of Kittie James "in a struggle which was of vital import to the human race." (She got that out of a newspaper. We have to read one every day, for our Current Events class.)

I stood right up, and said I didn't want to follow Kittie's banner, or anybody's but my own. I said I just wanted to spend my life elevating the masses, by writing pure literature for them, and I didn't see why men couldn't go on voting, and doing heavy work like that, while we women uplifted them. I felt just full of thoughts, but Maudie made me sit down before I could say any more. She said I had promised to let her appeal to my reason, and she wished I would do it and not interrupt. That was a rebuke, and it annoyed me very much. I sat down right away; but it was quite a long time before I could get my intellect calm enough

for Maudie to appeal to it. I kept thinking, instead, of crushing things I might have said before I sat down, and it was dreadfully hard not to get up again and say them then. They would have been a help to Maudie, too.

But Maudie was going right along with her speech all the time, and getting more excited every minute. I don't believe she really cared much about suffrage when she began, but by the time she finished she was ready to give up her work at St. Catharine's, and her dream of being a great actress, and go right out and be a suffragette, and get arrested and sent to prison. She had read about the English women in prison, and how they were fed through tubes, and she called them martyrs in a deathless cause, and said she was going to have Adeline Thurston write a poem about them. I spoke up again, then, and reminded her that Adeline was an anti-suffragist now, and would only write poems against suffrage. Maudie groaned and said: "This issue will split the convent. It will be like West Point at the outbreak of the Civil War, when the cadets had to take sides for the North or the South." And she looked at me with her eyes blazing, and said, "May Iverson, at such a crisis will you be on the fence, thinking about life and trying to write stories, or will you be out

on the great battle-field, fighting shoulder to shoulder with your dear ones!"

I tell you that made me sit up. When there's any fighting to do, no Iverson turns his back upon the foe. I saw at once that it was time to take sides, and that it was going to be terribly exciting. Kittie James was already in the enemy's camp, with three of our friends, and here was Maudie getting up an opposition party. I had to decide quickly, and I did it. The audience was convinced on the spot, and it got up and kissed Maudie and told her so. My, but she was glad! She just hugged me, though usually she's a very undemonstrative girl. Then she said: "Now we've *got* to get Mabel Blossom on our side. The three of us can sweep the girls off their feet; but if Mabel goes over to Kittie, you and I will have a battle to hold our own." And she added, gloomily: "We can never tell how Mabel Blossom will act about anything."

I knew that was so, and I promised Maudie I would appeal to Mabel's reason, and try to make her join us the very minute she got back, before the other girls saw her. I said I'd meet Mabel at the station, and ask her which she preferred to associate with on an intellectual level —Kittie James or us. I thought that might fetch Mabel; she is so proud of her intellect.

Maudie said it was worth trying, but she shook her head and said it would be just like Mabel to join the other side, so she could develop their intellects. Then her face brightened and she jumped; so I saw that she had another idea. She did, too. She said I might tell Mabel she could get a feeding-tube, and use it on Maudie if she wanted to. Maudie said she had wondered how a person felt when she was fed through a tube, and now she was going to get one right off and find out. She said she knew Mabel would be simply delighted to try such an experiment. Mabel was going to be a doctor, so she'd have to know about it sometime, and it might as well be now.

I wasn't very enthusiastic at first. It seemed to me like what Sister Irmingarde calls "an irrelevant detail." But I knew Mabel Blossom would join any society in the world for the sake of trying a medical experiment on some one, so I told Maudie the tube was surely the quickest way of getting to Mabel. Wasn't that bright? Maudie laughed hard; she doesn't always. We put Mabel's name on our list without waiting. So now we had three members—a president (Maudie, of course); a vice-president (Mabel); and a secretary (me). Just then Janet Trelawney knocked at the door and came in, and as

soon as we mentioned our club she joined it without waiting for any details, because she liked us better than she liked Kittie. We were glad she didn't insist on having an office, because there weren't any left; but we gave her a glass of ginger ale and a cookie to celebrate on. There was really something to celebrate, for, you see, we had four members, the same as Kittie had, and her club was a whole hour older than ours.

You'd better believe the next twenty-four hours were fevered ones. Whenever we saw a girl alone anywhere we appealed to her reason and got her to join St. Catharine's suffragettes. Janet Trelawney caught one girl in a bath-tub, and wouldn't leave her till she promised to join; and Maudie Joyce gave her best coral chain to a new girl, to convince her reason. It did, too, though she had half promised Kittie to join the antis. All I did was to appeal to the girl's reasons and read my stories to them; and they were so proud of being seen seated beneath the trees with a real author that they joined, "not single spies, but in battalions," as Shakespeare says. I got nine one Saturday, so you can see how a love for good literature is fostered in our convent school. Betweentimes we made banners with "VOTES FOR WOMEN"

on them. Mabel Blossom was with us by this time. She joined just as soon as we mentioned feeding Maudie through the tube. Before that her mind seemed to be "clouded with a doubt," like King Arthur's.

Perhaps you think Kittie James was idle all this time. She was not. The very moment Kittie heard about our club she began to work like mad to make hers bigger. She was unreasonable about it, too, and instead of seeing that we had a right to our own sacred convictions, Kittie thought we got up our club to kill hers. She hardly spoke to us on the campus at first, but pretty soon she saw how silly this was, especially as it made her miss lots of fun that had nothing to do with suffrage clubs. So she began to drop into my room again in the evening, the way she always had, but she wore such an impatient and busy look that it got on Maudie's nerves.

I am very broad-minded and just, so I can't help admitting that Kittie's club was really a success, after all. Her sister, Mrs. George Morgan, sent her lots of advice about it, and told Kittie everything the Chicago club did; and her brother-in-law, George Morgan, was tremendously interested and made heaps of suggestions. Kittie took them, too, and made her club socially exclusive, and had parties, and things

to eat, even if she couldn't eat them herself. Mabel Muriel pointed out to Kittie, very politely, that this was no reason why other girls shouldn't eat, and Kittie saw it that way at last, though Mabel Muriel said to see Kittie stand around and look at the food as it disappeared was enough to ruin one's appetite. Of course our clubs were making life very gay; for when we had a tea, the antis gave a reception, and when they had a musicale, we had an authors' reading and I read a story. It all took up so much time that Sister Irmingarde got nervous and began to make pointed remarks about study; but Maudie told her we were merely girding on our armor for the vital struggle on life's grim battle-field. After that Sister Irmingarde didn't seem to be able to say anything for a few minutes, though we could see she was impressed.

Then, all of a sudden, the way dramatic things happen in books, the crisis came. Kittie James challenged Maudie to a suffrage debate! She said we could have it in the study-hall, and both clubs could come, and some of the other students and Sisters. She said we could have a jury to decide which side won, and give a silver cup to the winner. She said the jury was George Morgan's idea, and the cup was hers—but I knew that before she told us. Imagine Kittie James

thinking of a jury! She told me afterward, with her own lips, that she thought we should have to borrow one from a court-room in Chicago, and she asked George to manage it, because he is a lawyer. George didn't. He said some of the Sisters would do. So we asked Sister Edna and Sister Irmingarde and Sister Estelle, and they all accepted. Then we ordered programmes, and flowers, and lemons and sandwiches, and other important things, and for days and days we were so busy we didn't stop to decide who was going to debate. When we asked Kittie she said very coolly that she was going to do it for her side, but if Maudie didn't feel up to doing it herself, she could ask some one else to represent our club. Kittie said she thought the president ought to do it, so she was going to do her duty; but she didn't want her decision to influence Maudie in any way.

I wish you could have seen Maudie's face, and Mabel's, when Kittie said that. I suppose mine looked funny, too, but of course I couldn't see mine. When Maudie could speak, she said she would represent her club, and that, as Kittie was very young and inexperienced, and ought to have every advantage, she could begin or finish—Maudie didn't care which. Kittie said she would end the debate, and she bowed to us all

and went away, leaving the loudest silence behind her that I ever heard.

The gentle reader cannot understand how strange it was, because the gentle reader doesn't know Kittie James. But we girls did, and to think of Kittie making a speech, and trying to express thoughts! I just simply haven't got far enough in my literary art to describe our emotions. I don't believe even Shakespeare could do it, or Henry James. Why, the first days Kittie was at St. Catharine's, she came to my room one night and woke me up to ask me why it was that she always felt so much sleepier in the morning than when she went to bed at night. She said sometimes she couldn't sleep at night, but she could always sleep after the bell rang at six in the morning. She said she had been wondering about it, and couldn't understand. Another time she interrupted Maudie, when she was writing an essay one night, to ask her why folks felt homesick when they were away from home. She stayed and talked about it a long time. She said her stomach felt as if she were dropping from the top floor of a high building in a dreadfully fast elevator, and she wanted to know why that was. Finally, Maudie and I told Kittie not to waste her time trying to think, but to come right to us when anything

puzzled her. And she always did, until now. Now she was being a leader of thought and patronizing Maudie Joyce!

Maudie had been working on some new banners with "VOTES FOR WOMEN" on them, for we were planning to have an open-air demonstration on the campus the next day. But Maudie put the banners down the very minute Kittie left, and went off to write her debate. I knew by the look in her eye that her proud spirit was stirred to its depths, and I felt sorry for Kittie. Kittie wasn't a bit sorry for herself, though. Mabel Blossom was so much interested in the challenge that she followed Maudie to her room, and told her she needn't eat through the tube until the day after the debate, though we had already fixed the tube day, before we knew about the debate. You'd better believe Maudie was glad to postpone it. The tube was going to be heroic, but not intellectual, of course.

Every day from then to the day we had the debate, Kittie James went around the halls looking important and murmuring to herself. She'd get off on the banks of the river that runs through the convent grounds, and put pebbles in her mouth and practise oratory, like a man I read about somewhere. Finally she swallowed a pebble by accident and had to stop, so

we had some peace. It was time, too, for I was getting dreadfully tired of hearing, "I say to you, students of St. Catharine's Academy," coming from all the nicest nooks on the grounds. I think Maudie would have had to go to the infirmary in a day or two more, she was getting so overwrought.

We were all pretty edgy by this time. If you have delicate nerves in your fingers, you know how perfectly awful you feel when you try to pare a peach. That's about the way every suffragette at St. Catharine's felt when an "anti" came round where she was. As for our lessons, Sister Irmingarde told me with her own lips that if I didn't do better during the coming month she would be reluctantly forced to change her mind about my ability as a student. You'd better believe that stirred me up! I dropped everything at St. Catharine's except study and suffrage. When the other girls had "spreads" in their rooms, Mabel Muriel Murphy and I were studying in our rooms with wet towels on our heads; for Sister Edna had reproached Mabel Muriel, too. But when there was suffrage or anti-suffrage going on, we were both at our posts, like the boy on the burning deck. For by this time it was a vital, burning issue, as the newspaper said, and was disrupting the girls, just as Maudie had thought it would.

The evening of the debate came at last. We had it in the assembly-hall right after supper, and Sister Irmingarde and Sister Edna and Sister Estelle were the jury, as they had promised to be. The anti girls were all on the left side, and we suffragettes sat on the right; and on the platform there was a speakers' rostrum, with a glass of water on it. When I saw those three nuns lined up in their chairs, and some other Sisters in the audience, I felt sorry for Kittie and Maudie. Sisters, especially the Sisters who teach us, make a very critical audience, and we girls had often indeed observed that they had a strange, cramping effect on our style—the kind one's family has. Both Maudie and Kittie looked nervous, I thought, and dreadfully serious. Kittie wore her newest dress—one her sister had sent her the week before—and Maudie had on a new embroidered blouse. They were pale but firm.

Maudie began, and, dear me! wasn't I proud of her! Maudie has one fault, and I have pointed it out to her freely, like a true literary artist to whom art comes before all. She uses too many big words, and is what Mabel Blossom calls "highfalutin" in her style. (Mabel has pointed this fault out, too.) But she began to debate in the simplest, most natural way, so that the Minims could have understood her if they had

been there. She said afterward that she did this because she wanted the antis to grasp her meaning.

Maudie said that the time came to every girl when she had to look into the depths of her own heart, and make up her mind what her life was going to be. Then, when she decided, all she had to do was to go ahead and make it that. You see how simple that was. The antis began to look bored right off, but I gave Maudie a smile of loving encouragement. She said there were only two things a girl could do—she could be an ivy and cling to things, or else she could be a strong support and let things cling to her. Then Maudie drew a long breath and said the very best thing any girl could have clinging to her was Principles. She waited for that to sink in, and we suffragettes applauded. Maudie went on to talk about Duty and Responsibility and the Community Spirit of Helpfulness.

Then she started in, in earnest. She said it was natural for the slothful and indolent to shirk work. She said we saw it done every day by some of those around us at St. Catharine's. It was easier to let the world go by, Maudie said, than to help to make it move; but, if everybody shirked, what would become of progress, and who would pass on the torch from hand to hand?

She said butterflies were very pretty to look at, but there was no place for them in a beehive. They did not help the soul to climb. Kittie James stood right up when Maudie said that, and tried to speak, but Adeline Thurston pulled her down. Maudie said the way to live one's life was not in slothful pleasures, eating "spreads," and neglecting one's studies, but to join hands in a ring of helpfulness that would reach round the world. She said it made her feel 'most sick sometimes to see opportunities for universal brotherhood and the community spirit lost by girls who had the priceless advantages of living at St. Catharine's and seeing the example of others who took life seriously; and she said love should be our guiding principle, and that every girl should devote half an hour to the reading of the best books every day. Then she told about the man who rapped on the door of his beloved, and was asked, "Who is there?" and he said, "It is I." But the door didn't open; and he rapped again, and was asked who he was, and he said, "It is I," and still the door didn't open. The third time he said, "It is Thou," and the door opened right off. Maudie said that was what we must all do—rap at the door and *be* what's behind it. Then, all of a sudden, she sat down, and we girls clapped like mad. The

antis looked at one another and smiled in a tired way.

When Kittie James got up, I thought she looked puzzled. She seemed to be thinking over Maudie's speech, and there was so much in it that I guess she didn't know just where to begin. But at last she said the previous speaker had told a pretty story, but that it reminded her of another one about two doors—one with a lady behind it, and the other with a tiger, and the man rapping at them didn't know which was which; and she said that was the way with a good many doors in life, and it was a mistake to be the thing inside until you were sure it wasn't a tiger. All the girls laughed at that, and so did the three Sisters on the jury. Sister Irmingarde looked quite proud of Kittie. Then Kittie James asked what would become of the wounded if the world was made up entirely of people fighting all the time, and she asked how anybody could expect to read half an hour a day when we had so many other things to do. She said it was very pretty to talk about hands joining in a big circle all around the world, but sometimes those hands might be neglecting other things they had to do; and she said when it came to "spreads" and indolence, she thought they were pretty evenly divided among our dear

companions. She took up everything Maudie had said and answered it, and then, all of a sudden, she sat down, too, and we girls looked at one another and had a kind of queer feeling—as if we were at a picnic, you know, and there weren't any pickles or hard-boiled eggs. Sister Edna is always talking about "an effect of incompleteness," when the girls dress too quickly and forget a tie or something. Someway, we got that kind of an effect right there.

In the mean time the jury were talking together, and everybody sat very still. At last, in about five minutes, Sister Irmingarde stood up. She said she had been asked by the other members of the jury to give its findings, and she said that at first it had not seemed easy. So much, she said, had been expressed, and so many different ideas introduced. However, she added, she and the jury had been given to understand before the debate that it was for and against suffrage. And all of a sudden I understood exactly what had happened.

Both Maudie and Kittie James had been so interested in suffrage, they hadn't said a word about it. They had just stood on the platform, throwing out different lines of thought, the way conjurers throw out long colored ribbons over an audience, and they expected that poor jury to

gather up all those threads and make a ball of them, because they couldn't do it themselves. Isn't this a clever way of describing what they did? Whenever thoughts like this befall me, my chest swells, and I realize how my Art is growing inside of me all the time. When I wrote my first book, I couldn't have done this. I should merely have said, briefly and plainly, that both Maudie and Kittie James, when they rose to debate, *forgot all about their subject!*

However, Sister Irmingarde was explaining this now, and she added that the fact was really "something of a relief to the jury," as the Sisters had feared the suffrage issue at St. Catharine's might divert our attention from our studies. We had now, she said, "effectually dispelled that fear." Then, with her wonderful smile, she concluded:

"Under the conditions, we, the jury, are not prepared to pass upon the suffrage question or the issue of the debate. But we are glad to testify that the debate has afforded us an hour of genuine enjoyment."

Wouldn't that make you proud? It made us all so happy that the suffragettes and the antis left the room with their arms around one another's necks; and Kittie James and Maudie Joyce got

up a "spread" in Maudie's room that was the biggest we have had this year.

But that night, after the Great Silence fell, and all the lights were out, and I lay awake wishing I hadn't eaten that last rarebit, I began to wonder if Sister Irmingarde and the jury *really* had been complimenting us. This reflection had not occurred to the other girls—but my intuition is deeper than that of their young and heedless minds.

The next morning Maudie came into my room while I was dressing. She looked pale and wan, so I wasn't surprised when she sat down in a chair and hid her face in her hands.

"May Iverson," she said at last, "why didn't you tell me last night that I had made a fool of myself?"

I hesitated. Then I spoke the truth, straight from a friend's loyal heart.

"I didn't know it myself," I said, "till after I was in bed. Then, of course, I had to wait."

"Do you think all the other girls know it, too," she asked me, "by this time?"

I nodded and reminded her that Kittie James had been a—had forgotten, too. Maudie sat for quite a while without a word. Ne'er before had I known Maudie Joyce to be too sad for speech. Finally she got up.

"This ends the clubs, and settles suffrage and anti-suffrage at St. Catharine's," she said, with a slow and terrible grimness. "Can't you just hear all the Sisters and the girls laughing at the mere mention of them?"

I could. I surely could. I just put my arms around Maudie and held her tight. While we stood there we heard some girls coming down the hall. Their feet were clattering on the polished floor, the way horses' hoofs sound in army plays. There must have been five or six of them. When they got outside of my door they laughed—dreadful, curdling laughs. Maudie turned paler.

"They know I'm here. They saw me come in. It has begun," said Maudie Joyce, setting her teeth.

"Any girl," she added, in trembling tones—"any girl that even mentions the word suffrage or anti-suffrage to me is my mortal enemy for life. But you may write a story about it, May Iverson, for I know how you love to dissect the quivering human heart."

Then she sat down and told me all her terrible sufferings, and how she wanted to die; and I knew that my dear, dear friend felt better.

II

I WRITE A PLAY

ONE Saturday afternoon in January a strange thing happened. I was left alone.

The gentle reader cannot possibly understand how unusual this was, so I will explain. Saturday is a half-holiday, and we girls have it to ourselves. What Mabel Blossom calls "the racking brain-strain of the week" is over. We haven't even a study-hour between dinner at one o'clock and supper at six. All we have to do is to exercise in the gymnasium or out in the grounds, and write home letters, and call on dear companions in the infirmary and read to them, and clear out our bureau drawers and closets, and mend our clothes, and practise an hour if we are studying music. So usually Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce and Mabel Muriel Murphy and Kittie James drop into my room about half past one, and we five girls are together from that time till the supper bell rings at six.

Other girls come and go. Adeline Thurston arrives to read her latest poem to us and have me point out its faults, which I do with the noble candor of true friendship. Janet Trelawney is pretty sure to rush in and out again on her way somewhere else, and about four o'clock lots more come, full of the beautiful hope that I may have a new story ready to read to them. Besides, the Minims keep trotting in to have me mend a pinafore or sew on a button or something—so the afternoon, which the nuns expect us to fill with Thought and Communion with our Souls, is really interesting.

But this particular day not a single person came near me. At first I didn't notice it. I had thought some beautiful thoughts during the week, and I hadn't had time to write them down. I got my note-book and did it then. After that I scrubbed my fingers with lemon juice till I cleaned off some ink stains that had been there since the day before, and I sewed ruching in the necks of three blouses. Just as I finished sewing in the last piece of ruching the clock struck three, and you'd better believe I was surprised. I felt "like one who treads alone some banquet-hall deserted," as the poet says. I listened for girlish voices and footsteps in the hall. There weren't any. I got up and took off my sewing-apron,

and put my needle neatly away in the under side of the table-scarf, where Sister Harmona wouldn't see it when she made her evening inspection, and I went straight to Maudie Joyce's room. When I got there I rapped, but there was no answer. I opened the door and went in.

Maudie Joyce was sitting at her desk with a pen in her hand. Mabel Blossom was sitting close beside her, holding a bottle of ink so Maudie could put her pen in it when she wanted to. They both looked straight past me with glassy eyes, like Banquo's ghost at the party. Well did I know what such looks meant. They had a plot inside of them; they were producing literature.

I opened the door (I had closed it behind me when I entered), and I started to reverently withdraw. I was ashamed of the noise my shoes had made on Maudie's floor. Who, indeed, can understand the crime of interrupting Art if a fellow Literary Artist cannot? I put my finger on my lips and shook my head to show I didn't expect them to speak, and I was 'most over the sill on my way out when Maudie addressed me.

"We're writing a play," she said, in a hushed voice.

I nodded. Then I closed the door very softly and went along down the hall to Mabel Muriel

Murphy's room. I knocked, and Mabel Muriel's voice told me to come in; I went. She was sitting on the window-seat, with a towel around her head. She had a pen in her hand, and the very biggest bottle of ink beside her that I ever saw. There were stacks and stacks of paper on the floor, and I saw that they were virgin sheets, to be filled by Mabel Muriel. I stood by the door, holding the knob in my hand.

"Which is it going to be?" I whispered to Mabel Muriel. "A story or a play?"

Mabel Muriel didn't answer till she had tied another knot in the towel around her head. She looked pale and worried, but her lips were set the way they were two years ago when she decided she would be a lady, like Sister Edna, and went to work and made herself one.

"It's going to be a play," she said then, doggedly; and I knew it surely was. When Mabel Muriel Murphy looked that way, things happened. Little did I wot, alas, what those things were going to be. I threw her a loving kiss, and closed the door and went away. It was strange and kind of unsettling to have my school companions doing such work without me, and without even *asking* me. It made me have a sinking feeling in my stomach. But there was one place I knew I could go and find what

my dear mother calls "old-time hospitality and the true social graces." Mamma is always mourning because there aren't any social graces any more, but she would feel lots better if she ever called on Kittie James. Kittie always acts as if one call made a party. She gets up to greet you, and she pulls out her best chair, and makes tea or chocolate, and stops every now and then to hug you. She makes you feel that when you came to see her you planted a seed in her heart that will blossom into the memory of a noble, unselfish deed.

Kittie's room is quite a long way from mine —a block and a half, really—off another hall. Usually, when we turn from our hall into Kittie's, we can smell the fudge Kittie is making, and many a girl is thus led there by unerring instinct who didn't intend to go near Kittie when she started out. But to-day there was no smell of fudge or anything else. A terrible suspicion clutched at my heart.

What if Kittie James—but I checked the morbid thought. Whatever Kittie James might be doing, I felt sure she would *not* be writing a play. That shows how little we know, alas! about our very own. Kittie is like my own child, for she is two years younger than I am, and I have thought all her thoughts for her ever since

she came to St. Catharine's. Yet, when I knocked at Kittie's door, there she was, with a geography on her knee, and a great big sheet of white paper on the geography, and a pencil in her mouth, that she was chewing on as hard as she could. Her lips were black from it. She jumped up the minute she saw me, and spilled the geography and the paper, and started toward me, but I checked her with a royal gesture and asked if it was a play. Kittie said it was. Then she sighed a long sigh and murmured that it seemed easy when you watched them in the theater, but it was strangely different when you tried to write things for them to say. Though she was polite from instinct, she didn't really seem to know I was there; so I went away.

After that, there was no sense in going to the other girls' rooms. I knew what they would be doing, for anything of that kind spreads in St. Catharine's, when it begins, like measles among the Minims. It had, too. I went back to my own room, and found little Josie Marshall, one of the dearest of the Minims, waiting for me. She is eight, but she looks about six, and she has great big brown eyes like an angel's, and dimples in her cheeks, and the most adorable expression, and there's hardly a minute of the day when that child isn't doing something she oughtn't to.

One nun, Sister Gregory, follows her round most of the time. Mabel Blossom says Sister Gregory has the most interesting life at St. Catharine's, and I think she has; but she gets sick every little while, and then two other Sisters have to take care of Josie.

Josie got up very politely as soon as I came into the room, and asked me to sew a long rip in her dress before Sister Gregory saw it. While I was doing it I noticed something in Josie's hand, and I asked her what it was. She got red, and wouldn't tell, and held on to it tight; so I thought it was a snake or a mouse or a spider, or perhaps all of them, wrapped up in a paper to frighten Sister Gregory. I made Josie show it to me, and at last she opened her hand and held out a big sheet of paper, with printed letters straggling down the side of it. This is what I read:

"WAT HO, CRYD THE KINK, TAK THE PRINCIS TO THE DUDGEN SELL."

I sat down hard. I had to. It was indeed well that a chair was near me. Then I took Josie's dimpled hands and drew her to my knee and looked deep into her eyes and told her to fear not, but to tell me the terrible truth. Was she writing a play?

Josie cried and said she was, and that Hattie Smith was, too, and little Hilda Martin and Ethel Catlin. She said they heard that all the big girls were writing plays that day, to surprise me. (Of course Maudie couldn't keep the secret!) Josie said the Minims wanted to surprise me, too. I saw then that the plays would have to run their course, like whooping-cough, so I gave Josie some advice and let her go. I urged her to wait nineteen years and finish her play, but Josie said she didn't want to. She went away with her dress mended, and I trust I need not tell the gentle reader what I did next. I wrote a play myself. I thought it would be interesting to do it while the rest were trying to, and it was. But I didn't finish it that afternoon. I gave it some more time, afterward.

Kittie James dropped her play the next week. She said she had finished the beginning of the first act and then she lost interest in it. Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom finished two acts. Their play was going to have five acts altogether, so Maudie wrote the first and Mabel wrote the second. After that they had such entirely different ideas about the third act that they had to give up the whole thing, and they hardly spoke to each other for a week. They both came and talked to me about it, but I was too busy to take

much interest in their childish prattle. I was writing my own play, and was almost at the end of my third act. If only I had known what to do then, I could have finished it. But I didn't, so it languished, and my heroine did things I didn't want her to do, and of course I got low in my mind and gloomy and morbid, the way any literary artist would when the leading character in a play sits down on a plot and obscures it.

While I was wandering o'er the campus one day with Mabel Blossom, Kittie James came running toward me, waving a letter above her head. Mabel and I were trying a thrilling experiment in psych-analysis. You know what that is. Some scientific person utters one word to you, and you utter the word it makes you think of. Then the scientific person knows every single secret of your soul. We had read an article about it in a magazine, so we tried it and found it was perfectly true. For instance, Mabel gave me the word *pig*, and I said *pen* without hesitating an instant. That showed her I was an author. Don't you see? If I hadn't been, I might have said *sty*.

We were very much excited and didn't want to be interrupted, but Kittie got to us, out of breath, and read her letter aloud, between gasps. It was from her brother-in-law, George

Morgan, and this is what he wrote. I have it yet, among my very dearest treasures, and I could get it and copy it if I needed to, but I don't. I know its beautiful words by heart:

DEAR KITTIE,—Josephine and I think it's about time you had a rest and some innocent pleasure, so we want you to come to us Friday night and stay till Monday. Bring May Iverson with you. Tell May to bring her play. She can read it to us on the way from the station. If it's as good as her stories, I don't want to wait any longer than that. Tell May I have read Shakespeare, Henry James, Turgenieff, and Laura Jean Libbey, and she can take it from me—she has them beaten to a frazzle.

I'll meet you at the train Friday night at six. Josephine is writing Reverend Mother to-day, so it's sure to be all right.

Your affectionate brother,

GEORGE.

You can imagine our emotions—especially mine. Even Mabel was excited. Ofttimes I have told the reader how desolate is the Artist's soul; but in that glorious moment it seemed that if there were only me and George Morgan in the world, there would be people enough. Then I thought of Josephine, his wife, so I added her and Kittie; but only out of politeness, and not because I needed them.

True to his plighted word, George was waiting for us at the station when our train got in. I had my play in my traveling-case, and two new stories, and three plots to tell him besides. But I decided not to read the play to him in the automobile on the way from the station, as there might be disturbing noises in the streets. I explained this to him as soon as we arrived, and he agreed with me. He said, very seriously indeed, that we couldn't be too careful about plots, and that it would be simply awful if the chauffeur heard my plot and wrote a play of his own on it the next day. He said the newspapers were full of such sad instances. He took us both that night to hear a perfectly beautiful concert. Of course I thought about my Art every minute I was there. Music has charms to soothe the savage soul, but few realize how much it helps with plots, too. I thought of five.

The next morning at breakfast George said he had a serious problem to decide, and he wished we would help him. He said he intended to give us most of his time while we were his guests, and to fill the days and evenings with pleasing diversions; so he and Josephine were going to take us to the matinée that afternoon, and to the theater again in the evening. But he said

he was a little doubtful about what to do for us that morning, because there were two claims of equal interest. He said it just that way. Then he added that one of the plans was to take us out on the South Side and let us look at a man who had never written a play. He explained that we would have to go that morning or not at all, because undoubtedly by afternoon the man would have begun a play. Kittie said the man would not interest her at all; she knew lots of folks who had never written plays. But all of a sudden she remembered St. Catharine's, and a heavy silence fell on her, and I asked Mr. Morgan what the other thing was.

He said it was to see the rehearsal of a real play one of his friends had written. It was being rehearsed at a down-town theater, and he had permission to go at ten o'clock and take us, but he added politely that, of course, he didn't want to bore us. Then he laughed and told me they wouldn't need electric lights in Chicago that night if my eyes stayed the way they were. I was holding on to my chair with both hands so I wouldn't jump. I never felt so excited in my life. To see real actors and actresses, in a real theater, practising on a real play—well, I won't say any more about it, but the reader can imagine the thoughts I thought.

I asked George if the author of the play would be there, and he said we might be able to find him if we gave all our time to it and looked long and earnestly. He asked Josephine if it would be well to make the occasion a sporting event by offering a prize for finding the author, or letting us hunt for him, like Easter eggs; but I said at once that I'd rather see the play, and Kittie said she would, too. Then Josephine told George to behave while we were gone, and we raced off to get our hats and coats.

I will not pause to describe the crowded streets or the prancing steeds and well-dressed throngs we saw as we went our way. Kittie and I didn't like their clothes very much. Besides, when I get deep into my plot I always want to go right on down. If you don't, it's like offering a baby a bottle and suddenly dragging him away from it to look at a woolly lamb he doesn't love at that supreme moment. At least that's the way I feel when real authors suspend their heroine over the terrible chasm by one golden lock, and then start in and describe scenery awhile.

So Kittie and George Morgan and I got to the theater as quickly as we could, and George pulled a bell in a little side gate, and a cross old man opened it for us and looked surprised and disapproving. But George handed him a card, and

we went down a cement alley and into a dark hall, and finally out on a big gloomy stage, with ten or twelve men and women on it. They all wore coats and hats and seemed cold and sad. One woman sat in the middle of the stage, with her back close to the footlights, clenching her hands and biting her under lip. She had a pale, wan face, and looked as if she had *Lived*, so I asked George who she was; but at first he didn't tell me. I think he wanted to let me guess. I did afterward, too. There was a red-haired man, bald on top, sitting near her, and George said he was the stage director, and that in the happy, care-free days of old he would have had something to do with putting on the play, but now we had changed all that. Everybody else was sitting, except two women who were reading to each other in a hesitating way, like Minims over a primer lesson. Before they had read much the wan-faced lady said:

"Let's cut all that out; it isn't needed."

So the women who had been reading sat down and scratched out whole type-written pages with little pencils. I asked George what the pages were, and he said they had been "parts," but were now as the snows of yesteryear, whatever he meant by that. Other men and women got up and read things from type-written sheets of

MEN AND WOMEN GOT UP AND READ FROM TYPE-WRITTEN SHEETS

paper. Sometimes they read alone and sometimes to one another, and once or twice they crossed the stage or went to an imaginary window for something. One man had grim and terrible lines, but he read them like a lost lamb bleating. It didn't matter, for as soon as anybody read anything the wan-faced lady said, "Let's cut that out," and the red-haired man, bald on top, did it.

I was getting interested by this time, for I knew now that each man and woman was a member of the company, and that the type-written sheets contained their speeches in the play, and that the reason they had read them so slowly and without any feeling was because they hadn't had time to learn them yet. I asked George if the wan lady wasn't the star, and he said she was, and that my intuition was wonderful. I was interested in her then, of course, and I studied her long and earnestly. I told George she looked as if she had drunk deep from the cup of life, and George said she had, and all the indications were that she would swallow the cup, too, before she got through, unless it was chained to the pump. Some day I'm going to make a special study of George's language, and write out what it means. That will surprise him! Now I haven't time. Besides, I don't always know myself. I asked

him when the rehearsal was going to begin, though, and when he told me I grasped his meaning without any trouble.

He said it had begun now, and that when the star and her little meat-chopper got through with it there would be a quick change from a four-act comedy to a four-act monologue. Of course I know what a monologue is, so I decided he meant that the other actors weren't going to have any lines left. He did mean that, too. Every member of the company read long, thrilling speeches, and then cut them down to three or four words, with the heroine's name in them. The leading man had a perfectly beautiful speech, about a crisis in his life, but when the star got through cutting it, all he had to say was, "Here comes Isabel." Isabel was the star's name, in the play.

The girl George said was the ingénue had five lovely paragraphs to say in the first act, all about the missing will and where her uncle had placed it; but when the star had cut her part, the only words she had left were, " 'Tis Isabel." I was sorry for the ingénue, and she seemed dreadfully sorry for herself. But the star said it didn't matter, because she could get all that about the will into one of her own speeches.

At last a very serious woman, quite old, got

up from a chair beside us and went to the middle of the stage and read in terribly gloomy tones that she wondered if Master would be home for dinner. The red-haired man, bald on top, jumped at her.

"Put some ginger into that," he yelled. "Come in with a hop, skip, and jump."

He took his coat tails in his hands and did it for her, and Kittie and I laughed till we cried, which was a serious error, for he wasn't trying to be funny at all. He was just showing her how to be graceful. The woman said she hoped he would excuse her, but in the play she was a faithful old family servant, of sixty-eight or so. She didn't know she had to dance in, especially as she had a very tragic scene in the third act that didn't go with dancing servants at all. The star spoke right off, biting her lip and clenching her hands harder than ever. I never saw anybody who acted so nervous—not even Kittie James when she is in the infirmary.

"Let's cut all that out," the star said. "I don't see any need of the scene."

So they cut it out, and a big blond man rushed in and caught the star to his breast and called her his darling. Kittie and I were getting excited now, for it really looked as if they were going to rehearse at last; but the star drew her-

self coldly from his embrace, and said she simply wouldn't have him act the scene that way, because he would kill it if he did. The man sat down and mopped his forehead.

"My God, Miss Jones," he said, "I'm your husband in this play, and I haven't seen you for two years. You appear unexpectedly at a crisis in my life, and it seems to me that my lines call for some big acting. I can't accept you as if you were a dish of potatoes offered me at dinner, can I?"

The star began to say that she thought his scene ought to be cut out, anyway, but George Morgan rose and addressed us in grim, incisive tones, as real writers would say:

"Come on, girls," he said. "Let's go. I invited you to a rehearsal, not to an abattoir. I won't sadden your young lives any longer."

We were not exactly sad, but we saw that he was, and Kittie and I were not sorry to go. It had all been so different from what we expected. We thought there would be a brilliantly lighted stage and beautiful costumes and a thrilling play, with us as the only audience. And here we had been watching people sit around and shiver in their overcoats and jackets, and ever and anon rise and say, "But Isabel comes," or, "Wait for Isabel." They didn't have to wait for Isabel

very long. She was always coming; or if she was going we knew she would be right back. The star didn't take the trouble to read her own lines, but she was holding a fat book just bursting with long speeches, and ever and anon she wrote in some more. Sometimes she wrote in lines taken from other parts, and sometimes she wrote in lines she happened to think of. When she did that she would read it to the red-haired man, bald on top, and he would laugh if it was funny or drop a silent tear if it was sad. Of course that's just my beautiful way of making you understand. He didn't really drop the tear, but you could see he wanted to.

It gave me a queer feeling to see her writing things in the author's play. It was like seeing a purse stolen, or a baby slapped, or some other low act. I told George Morgan this, when we got out into the cement alley again, and he looked at me with a lovely expression in his eyes and said I was a trump and he had always known it. He added that it was a little trying for the author to have the star rewrite her play, especially as "her entire vocabulary consisted of sixty words, beginning with "*Say*" and ending with "*Listen.*" He said the author knew a great many words and tried to use them in the right place, so they would mean something, but that the star

was "handicapped by no such limitations." Then he sighed and laughed, and took us to a place where we had heavenly French pastry and ice-cream, and I forgot the author's sorrows.

I remembered them again when George heard my play that night and asked me to give him a solemn, sacred promise that I would not attend a rehearsal of it if it was ever produced. He said he could not bear the thought of my anguish if I did. I promised, and George looked lots more cheerful. Little did I wot, though, how soon I would be called upon to live up to my thoughtless words.

The very hour I got back to St. Catharine's Mabel Blossom and Maudie came to see me. They had formed a dramatic club, and wanted to produce my play. They said they would put it into rehearsal at once, and they had elected Mabel Muriel Murphy manager, so her rich father would send lots of scenery and beautiful costumes. They said they were going to let Mabel Muriel play the leading part, too, and that Maudie would be the lover and Mabel Blossom the funny man. They had made all these plans without asking me, and lots more besides. They talked so fast, and had so much to say, that I couldn't get my breath for a minute. When I did I said there was, alas! one terrible obstacle.

I had given my solemn word to George Morgan not to go to any rehearsals of my play, and I must keep it. Then I waited for them to groan and sink into chairs and say, "All is lost," but they didn't. They looked at each other, and their faces shone like the twin electric lights over the great gate leading into the convent grounds. They were so excited that Maudie forgot to be tactful. She hugged me hard and said it was just lovely that I had promised, because Mabel Muriel wouldn't be manager and star unless she had what she called "a free hand."

"That means that she wants to do the whole thing," Maudie said, "and she thinks you would interrupt and interfere if you were there. She said she wouldn't be stage-manager or star unless you promised not to come to rehearsals."

You'd better believe *that* hurt my feelings. But one of my rules of life is never to let any one know she is doing this, so of course I couldn't show it. I said I would think it over, and I went off and roamed by the river's brim, and wondered why folks were born, anyway, and had to live, when life was so grim and terrible. Nature looked just the way I felt. The river was frozen over, and the ground was covered with snow, and I couldn't see a living thing anywhere. It was awfully lonely, but kind of quieting, too, and

by and by I began to feel better. I realized first of all that, even if the girls wanted me dreadfully, I simply couldn't go to my rehearsals, so what was the use of fussing? Then I remembered that it was *my* play they wanted to produce, not theirs, and this was a compliment, even if they hadn't finished any of theirs and couldn't. Finally, all of a sudden, I thought of a good end for my third act, and when that came of course I was so happy I didn't care about anything else; for, as any Artist knows, Art is enough, and the life that holds it needs naught else. It's lucky it doesn't, too, for, young as I am, I have oft observed that it doesn't usually get much else.

I went back to the convent with springing steps, and as soon as the girls saw me they knew all was well, and they came running. When I am happy over my Art my dear companions seem like shadow girls, and they know it. So they were not surprised when I told them briefly they could have the play, but I didn't want to talk any, because I had to finish it right off. They were grateful and tactful, and walked silently by my side to the door of my room, and left me there with reverence. I went in and finished the play. It was simply beautiful. Every single character was killed off before I got through,

and they all died young, too. I cried quarts over that play. The next morning I gave it to the girls, and that's the last I knew about it till I attended the performance, one Saturday afternoon, in the small study hall.

Since I wrote that last line I've sat for a long time with my chin in my hand, wondering if I could describe that performance. Now I know I can't. First of all, I would have to dip my pen in my heart's blood, and there wouldn't be enough of that to write it all, and where would I get any more? So I'll just tell what Mabel Muriel Murphy did to my play, and then the reader can vainly try to imagine how he would feel if he had written the play.

First of all, she had made my five-act tragedy into a three-act comedy.

You would think that would be change enough to satisfy anybody, wouldn't you? But it wasn't enough to satisfy Mabel Muriel Murphy.

She had put the fourth act first.

She had put the second act last.

She had written the third act over, and changed all my characters and situations.

When the time came for a character to die, she had made her dance instead.

She had cut out all the parts, except her own

—yards and yards of them—just like the lady star in Chicago.

She had put in all the scenes she liked best from her own play.

She had let Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom put in all their favorite scenes from *their* play.

The only reason I knew they were playing my play was that the title was the same, and my name was under it.

I stayed and watched that play till it was almost finished. I didn't want to, but my legs wouldn't carry me out; they felt like paper things, and wobbled under me, and I was cold all over. Sometimes the audience—there were forty girls in the audience—clapped and turned and looked at me, and nodded as if they liked the play; but I stared straight ahead, with glassy eyes. I thought I was dreaming a perfectly terrible dream. Toward the end I found I could get up, and I did; and I crept out of the room and flew along the hall and out of the building and across the campus, and on and on, till I reached my favorite birch-trees by the river. The ground was covered with snow, but I lay right down flat and put my face into it and melted yards and yards of it—the snow, I mean; not of my face. And I dug my fingers down through the snow

against the hard ground and groaned. I wanted to die, but I knew I couldn't.

It was Sister Irmingarde herself who came and found me hours later, and put her arm around me in the dearest way, and led me to the infirmary and saw that I had a hot bath and hot lemonade. She talked to me beautifully, too, and said things she had never said to me before, about my possibilities and what I could make of my character if I tried; and there was no twinkle in her beautiful eyes—only kindness and sympathy for me. She wanted me to forgive Mabel Muriel and the other girls, but I couldn't do it yet; I told her that when I was an old, old woman I would try to.

I don't remember much about the next few days. I could just speak politely to the girls, and that was all. I couldn't be friendly, though I tried because Sister Irmingarde wished me to. She told me they were very unhappy, and I guess they were. I made them take my name and title off their play, and I burned my play the very next day, with a match, in my washbowl.

One morning, four days later, Kittie James approached me timidly and handed me a letter, and went away crying. The letter was from George Morgan, and this is what it said:

DEAR MAY,—Kittie has written me about your play. It's hard luck, and I want to say I'm sorry. Don't forget that there are others, and that it's all in the day's work. It was only a fortnight ago, you know, that you and I sat and watched a company making a Spanish omelet of *my* play. So, as a fellow playwright, I understand how you feel. But we'll show them, *yet!*

Your friend,

GEORGE MORGAN.

Perhaps you think I didn't cry over that letter! I cried till I was sick. And most of all because I hadn't known it was George's own play we were seeing rehearsed! To think I hadn't told him more about how dreadfully sorry I was over what they were doing to it! I realized now that what happened to him and to me probably happens to every one, and that into each playwright's life some star must fall. Isn't that beautifully expressed—and so sad, too!

But there was yet time to tell George things. I went straight to the reading-room and stayed there for hours. I read Gray's *Elegy*, and the death of Ophelia and Juliet, and Burns's farewell to Highland Mary, and Sir Walter Raleigh's last letter to his wife, and the death of Little Nell, and Napoleon's last days at St. Helena, and parts of *David Copperfield* ("Never again, O

Steerforth, to clasp that hand in love and friendship!"), and about the battles of Waterloo and Leipzig; and I copied all the saddest parts of every one of them, to quote where needed. After that I thought about my own play.

Then I wrote to my dear, dear friend and fellow-playwright—a letter of sympathy and understanding.

III

THE REDUCTION CURE FOR KITTY JAMES

ONE day, during our study-hour, Kittie James slipped a note into her Rhetoric and then handed the book to me. It was just after the girls had "produced" my play, so of course I wasn't speaking to any of them. But Kittie was not as much to blame as the others; therefore I read the note. These were its enigmatic words:

"Meet me under the big willow at five o'clock. Sit down beside me, but don't speak. Just watch what happens."

I tore up the note quickly, so Sister Irmingarde wouldn't be disappointed if she saw it and tried to get it, and I glanced at Kittie. Her sweet face was pale and wan. I raised my eyebrows and looked politely interested, but Kittie shook her head and kept her eyes on the printed page, which was indeed the last place where one would expect to find them. At the end of any study-

hour Kittie James can tell with unerring accuracy what every girl in the study-hall wears, and whether she has anything new on, or has done her hair in a different way; but Kittie never knows her lessons, and rarely does she know what the book in front of her is, though she keeps one there for looks.

Kittie told me once with her own lips that she plans all her clothes and her convent "spreads" during study-hours, and the clothes of the children she is going to have some day, and how her future home will look, and the kind of ties her husband will wear. She said she invented some "dream ties" for him once—pale and pink, with pansies and forget-me-nots painted on them—and gave them to her brother-in-law, George Morgan, to see how they would look "in the flesh." George didn't wear them. He said the dream was one to appall the strongest soul, and that it had given him a permanent and incurable insomnia. He said it just that way. He told Kittie that every night afterward for weeks, just as he began to sink into an innocent slumber, he felt himself bound hand and foot by painted family ties, and the awful horror of it always woke him up, bathed in a cold perspiration. Kittie felt badly, and tears came into her eyes when she told me about it. She hadn't meant to

make him suffer. But she was glad, since some one had to, that she had learned the truth in time, and that it was George who felt that way, and not Algernon. Algernon is what *his* name is going to be.

Of course this hasn't anything to do with the other experience of Kittie's, which I am about to relate if the gentle reader will wait a minute. I put it in to throw light on my heroine's character, the way Arnold Bennett does in his books, when nothing much happens, and you think nothing's going to, and all the time the human soul is being dissected before your poor, blind eyes. Now I will return to Kittie in the study-hall, pale and wan. There will be more references to literary topics and public questions in my future work, though. As I grow more mature in my art I see how wrong it is to make my stories a source of entertainment only, when they might be a source of knowledge, too. Besides, no merely entertaining literature can Live.

I met Kittie under the willow at five o'clock. It was not easy, for I had other things to do. But who would fail a dear companion with secrets to tell? Our convent orchestra was rehearsing for the Commencement programme, and of course we were going to play the overture to "Zampa." I had to lead on the piano, and I

was expected to practise my piano part *hard*, every day, from half-past four to half-past five, in one of the little music-rooms off the main hall. Though I have a light step and am very swift in my movements, it was not easy to get away, for Sister Amelia, one of the teachers of music, has a dreadfully suspicious nature, and walks up and down the hall, listening to be sure we are all at work. The din is frightful when we are. "Zampa" from one room, the "Spring Song" from another, Brahms's waltzes and "Parsifal" from others, bits of Chopin and Beethoven and Grieg from the rest—dozens of rooms and dozens of pianos going like mad on different things. Sister Amelia looks quite nervous sometimes, after she has stood it all day. Naturally, I couldn't be practising "Zampa" and sitting out in the grounds with Kittie at the same time, so I compromised. I got Janet Trelawney, who plays beautifully, to go to my music-room and practise "Zampa," so Sister wouldn't be disappointed when she went by; and I stole off to Kittie and the drooping willow.

Kittie was 'most as drooping as the willow when I reached her. She was sitting alone on the bench as I approached, and she rose and bowed (Kittie has the most beautiful manners!) and motioned me to sit beside her. I did,

without a word, and we waited for five minutes, and nothing happened.

I began to get restless. I am nervous and high-strung, like all literary artists, and sitting down without talking rarely interests me. There are so many things to do and life is so short. Kittie saw my feet moving, and she made a sign, eager and imploring, for me to wait. I waited, and I began to think of a book I had been reading, and how they carried the heroine out dead (I've only read that description three times, but I know it by heart), and I forgot about Kittie and "Zampa" and other unimportant things, as I always do when my mind is on Art.

Suddenly Kittie nudged me, and I saw Mabel Muriel Murphy coming toward us. I started up to go away, for Mabel was the girl who was the stage-manager for my play, and did the very worst things to it, and changed it from a five-act tragedy to a three-act comedy, and made all the characters dance instead of dying when their last sad hour came. Kittie caught my arm and pulled me down on the bench again, and I remembered her note and sat still and waited, though terrible doubts assailed me. Was Kittie James trying to force me to be friends again with Mabel Muriel? If she was, I knew that I must root Kittie, too, from my crushed and empty heart.

Mabel Muriel came on with slow and solemn steps, as if she were following a bier. Her head was bowed on her breast, but I guess she caught a glimpse of us out of the corner of her eye. She faltered when she saw me, as well indeed she might, and one foot started backward by instinct. She drew it forward again with terrible determination, and came straight up to us, and handed Kittie a little piece of paper. Then she walked away. There was something strangely impressive about it. I felt a cold chill running slowly down my spine, prickling as it passed. That's alliteration, and I'm glad I thought of it. Such touches are what make style.

Kittie opened the note and looked at it. Then she handed it to me. Its words were few and simple. They read:

"*Try the lemon cure.*"

My mind is very quick, and everybody says my intuition is simply wonderful; but when I read that note I sat and stared at Kittie like any ordinary, stupid girl. She had her finger on her lips, to show I was not to speak. Mabel Muriel was already disappearing among the trees, but I saw Kittie glance quickly in another direction, and I looked, too, and there was Maudie Joyce coming along with measured tread. I could almost hear Chopin's Funeral March as I watched

her, and I could almost see the dead leaves whirling over the new-made grave, the way they do in the last pages of the sonata. Sister Harmona says she can't hear them whirl when I play that sonata, and I don't wonder. I can't always, myself; but I hear them plainly when Paderewski or Sister Cecilia plays it.

Maudie hesitated, too, when she saw me, so I realized that, whatever was going on, the girls had not expected me to be in it. I was, though, and this pleased me. I made up my mind that very minute to stand by Kittie to the death. Maudie pulled herself together, walked straight up to us with her head bent, handed Kittie a note, and went away. The note said:

"*Buttermilk will do it.*"

Kittie raised her lily hand to show that I was not to speak. I wouldn't have had time to, anyway, for Adeline Thurston was already stalking toward us, her eyes on the ground and her hands crossed on her breast. She uncrossed them long enough to hand Kittie a note. Then she went away as the others had done, except that she seemed to feel even worse. Of course, Adeline, being a poet, looked worse than the others, too. Kittie and I read her note together, for I simply could not wait. It said:

"*Roll on the floor fifty times every morning and fifty times every night.*"

By this time I knew I was assisting at some grim, mysterious rite, so I began to enjoy myself. But Kittie's face was getting redder and redder, and her mouth looked like a little pink hyphen in her face. That means it looked thin and straight, the way a hyphen looks. I hate to explain, but I'd hate worse to have the gentle reader miss it.

A few minutes la er Mabel Blossom came along exactly as the other girls had come, with purposeful and mournful mien, and handed Kittie a note. It was simple and direct. It said:

"*Stop eating.*"

Before any more girls had time to come, Kittie took me by the hand and led me to a shrine away off in another part of the convent grounds. We sat down and waited. Before five minutes had passed, little Josie Gregory, one of the Minims, arrived and handed Kittie a note. The handwriting was Jennie Hartwell's, and it read:

"*Walking works wonders.*"

Kittie tore the note up, and threw the pieces on the ground and put her heel on them. Almost before she had done it, another Minim came with another note, and after that they came and came

and came, like leaves in Vallombrosa, as the poet says. That means there were a lot of notes. Sometimes a Minim brought them, and sometimes it was an older girl; but, whoever it was, she came slowly and sadly, as if to take one last look at the dear face within. You know what I mean. I don't want to put it any more plainly, for, indeed, it is an awful thought; but it is the only one that expresses the way those messengers acted.

The little Minims were the worst of all. After they delivered their notes they stood and stared with round, wondering eyes, as if they were waiting for something dreadful to happen. They were, too; for, as we learned afterward, Mabel Blossom had told them with her own lips that if they waited long enough, perfectly quiet, with their eyes fixed on Kittie James, maybe they would see her burst! We didn't know this then, but it made us feel dreadfully nervous to see them standing round us in a circle, and closing in like the wolves near the Russian woman's sleigh when she threw out her children to save herself. I was thinking about the Russian woman, and how dreadful she was, as well as about Kittie—I've always been able to think of different things at the same time—when Kittie suddenly rose to her feet and threw her arms over her head and shrieked.

She is a nervous child, and when she begins to shriek she can't stop. So she went on doing it and getting hysterics as fast as she could get them, and the Minims shrieked, too, and scattered in every direction, and then watched us from behind trees, waiting for what they thought was coming. I rubbed Kittie's hands and talked to her, and pretty soon I got her quieted down. Then I took her to my room, with the notes she hadn't had time to tear up, and finally I got the whole story out of her. This was it:

Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom had made up their minds that Kittie James was getting too fat, so they began to talk to her about it. At first Kittie thought it was a joke and laughed at the things they said. But pretty soon they got the other girls into it, and everybody talked to Kittie about getting stout, and told her it dulled her brain, and advised her to stop. They said the way to do it was to diet. Kittie got dreadfully tired hearing about it, for she loves food more than almost anything else. After that, when they didn't stop, she got angry, and finally, when they still kept it up, the terrible thing happened that comes sometimes in the case of gentle, beautiful natures like hers—she got stubborn. She told the girls if they didn't like to look at her they could go and look at

some one else and leave her alone, and she said she would get fatter than ever, just to show them. Then they began to send her notes and to get the whole school to help them. You see, it had got to be a kind of a game, and a terribly funny joke to every one but Kittie.

All this had been going on for more than a week, and I hadn't known it. But that was because I was hardly speaking to any of the girls, after the way they had treated my play. They came and talked to me every day and tried to make up, and I answered direct questions courteously, and then excused myself and left them. Naturally they didn't like it, either—and of course they had got into mischief and were driving Kittie James into hysterics.

I made Kittie some tea and gave her two big pieces of chocolate cake and some strawberry jam and some fudge, and we read the notes and talked and decided what we would do. I had a lovely time planning. Of course it was my duty to stand by Kittie, who was one against many; and it is a wonderful experience, and all too rare, to have duty go hand in hand with delight, as real writers would say if they were clever enough to think of it. It is surprising how rarely they do think of things like that. Oft, indeed, I see places in their work where I could

have said things better. But I am forgetting my heroine, which Sister Irmingarde says is one of my most serious literary faults. I notice it in Henry James's stories, too, for pages and pages; therefore, I don't worry over it as much as I do over my other faults.

As soon as I began to think about Kittie's problem, Kittie stopped trying to. She is a girl it is a pleasure to help. She sat still and ate chocolate cake, and gained two pounds more, she told me the next day, and I thought and thought, till the solution of our problem flashed upon me. To tell Kittie was the next thing, and I did it.

That night we "planned a campaign," as papa says, that would show the girls the error of their ways. While we were in the most interesting part of it the lights went out and the Great Silence fell, and I had to creep alone through the pitch-black convent halls from Kittie's room to mine, a block and a half away. It was not pleasant, in that awful darkness and silence, full of memories of beautiful dead nuns. Every time I find myself alone at night in those long, ghostly corridors, that is what I feel around me—the nuns who have died, silently keeping step with me. I can almost see their black veils flutter, and hear the soft click of their rosary beads

one against the other. It does not frighten me; the memory of them is too sweet for that. But it makes me feel very solemn, and I am glad when I get back to my own room and see the stars shining in through my windows.

The next day Kittie James and I formed a secret society—the Epsilon Sigma; and by sunset every girl at St. Catharine's knew about it and was crazy to join it. But we didn't let them. We confined the membership to ten girls—eight besides ourselves. Need I add that we chose them from among the girls who had had nothing to do with my play or with reducing the weight of Kittie James? We did. We took in Janet Trelawney first. She had been in the infirmary for three weeks, so neither of us had anything against her. Then we gathered in the most brilliant of the other girls—outside of our old set—and I can tell you they were proud and glad when we asked them. I never saw girls so happy and grateful. And of course all the other girls stopped bothering Kittie, right off, in the hope that we would take them into the Epsilon Sigma.

We got permission to go into town in the afternoon, and we ordered the badges from Mr. Whitten—"our genial fellow-townsman in the jewelry business," the local newspaper calls

him. He made them in three days, and they were too sweet—gold ovals, with the monogram E.S. on them, and pins in the back to fasten them to our blouses. Then we spent a lot of money for food.

That night we had the most gorgeous banquet in the history of St. Catharine's. It was in honor of our secret society. Before eating we initiated the new members, and you'd better believe they were ready for the banquet after we got through with them. We had cake and cold chicken and jelly and fudge and pickles and ice-cream and lemonade and Welsh rarebit and potted tongue and deviled crabs and French pastry. We put blankets over the transom of my room, so the Sisters wouldn't be disturbed by our lights, and we ate and ate, and talked in whispers, and invented a secret grip and a password, and I never had so much fun in my life. Every girl there was just bursting with food and pride because she was with us.

The next morning Kittie James went to the infirmary and stayed two days. It was very inconvenient, when we had so much to do, but Kittie said the banquet was worth it. In the mean time I wrote mama to send me a box, and I told her what to put in it—cold ham and turkey and cream cake and jelly cake, and other

things just as good. It came the day after Kittie got well, so we had a banquet that night to celebrate her return to our midst. The very next day poor Kittie was in the infirmary again, and the nuns couldn't understand it; but Kittie didn't mind going. She said the second banquet was even more worth it than the first. As soon as she was able to sit up she wrote to her sister, Mrs. George Morgan, asking for a box, and it came right away; so Kittie gave a banquet the night she left the infirmary, and the following morning she went back to it—to the infirmary, I mean. She was there four days that time, and the convent infirmarians began to talk about sending for a specialist to examine her. She got better, though, and by the time she was out George Morgan sent me a box, so the Epsilon Sigma was ready for another banquet.

George is my very dearest friend—far, far dearer than any one else except mama—and it is the tragedy of our lives that he wed before we had found each other. If I told you what was in that box, you'd never believe it. Chickens in aspic, and candied fruit, and a five-pound box of the richest chocolate creams you ever ate, and loads of preserves. Kittie was out of the infirmary just in time for that banquet, but the

THE VERY NEXT DAY POOR KITTIE WAS IN THE INFIRMARY AGAIN

next day she was very sick, and the Sisters sent to Chicago for the specialist.

All this time our old friends were not idle. They couldn't be, with every other girl at St. Catharine's talking about those banquets and describing them till their mouths watered. Janet Trelawney told everybody they were like the feasts of Lucullus, that we read about in history. The day after the last banquet Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce and Mabel Muriel Murphy came to me together and apologized again for what they did to my play. I accepted their apology politely. Then I changed the subject and talked about the weather. Mabel Blossom said the food at the convent table was nourishing but monotonous, and I said I didn't remember much about it, because I hadn't eaten any of it lately.

The girls mentioned the Epsilon Sigma in an off-hand way, and I preserved a calm silence. Finally Mabel Blossom spoke up again in trembling tones, and asked whether I wouldn't let bygones be bygones. While she was speaking Maudie Joyce burst into tears and said they had treated my play dreadfully, and that they never could forgive themselves, and they had never been so unhappy in their lives, and she didn't care a fig for my old banquets or my club, but

she did love me and always would, and wouldn't I please forgive her and be natural again. She said it all just like that, without stopping, and she kept wiping her eyes till her handkerchief was a little wet ball. Mabel Muriel Murphy was crying, too, by this time, and Mabel Blossom looked dreadfully cross, which with her is the sign of her deepest suffering.

I looked at my dear companions, and all of a sudden my icy heart melted as if Maudie had taken it into her warm, friendly hands; and I kissed the girls and told them everything was all right, and I meant it. We had a beautiful afternoon together—it happened to be Saturday—and it was exactly like the dear old days. The nuns wouldn't let me see Kittie; she was too sick. I saw her the next afternoon, when she was a little better, and told her how I had forgiven the girls, and begged her to, and to let them come into the Epsilon Sigma. But Kittie wouldn't. She said she had suffered too much, and I guess she had. She said if she had to die I could call them around her death-bed for a last scene of forgiveness; but while there was any hope of life she wouldn't look at them. I knew how she felt. I had felt even worse the terrible day of the play.

Kittie was quite sick for almost a week, and

when she came back to us I gave a banquet for her in my room. It wasn't a meeting of the Epsilon Sigma; it was just a celebration of Kittie's recovery. So she let me ask Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy; and I invited the Epsilon Sigma girls, too, for of course we would not desert those who had stood by us in our trouble. Kittie sat at my right, and during the whole evening the girls kept staring at Kittie and me, and then looking at one another with long, meaning glances. They were lovely to her, though, and Kittie forgave them before the banquet was over, and everything was as jolly as it could be. But every now and then the girls of our old set would begin to speak and then stop. I could see that they were dreadfully interested in something that they didn't dare to talk about, and Kittie saw it, too. We were curious about it, but we didn't ask any questions.

The next day Mabel Blossom came to my room and sat looking at me for five minutes without speaking. She does that sometimes, and usually it makes me nervous; but this time it didn't, for I saw there was loving admiration in her eyes. There isn't, always. I went on calmly clearing out my bureau drawers, without paying much attention to her, and at last she drew a deep breath and spoke.

"May Iverson," she said, in thrilling tones, "you really are a wonder! I never saw any one like you!"

Before I could ask why she had not discovered this long before, the door opened and Maudie Joyce and Mabel Muriel Murphy came in. They sat down and looked at me, exactly the way Mabel Blossom had looked. There was awe and also a touch of reverence in their gaze. I enjoyed it for a while, but at last I couldn't stand not knowing what it meant, so I asked them. They all began to talk at once, but Mabel Blossom's voice rose loud and clear above the other two, and finally they stopped.

"May Iverson," she began again, "you are a wonder!" And she went on to say that in less than three weeks I alone had accomplished something the entire school had worked on and failed in. She told about Kittie James and how they had tried to reduce her weight and couldn't, and all the different methods they had used; and she said I had simply walked in and had a lovely time, and given Kittie a lovely time, and eight other girls a lovely time—and *done it.*

At first I couldn't quite understand, but of course I didn't show this; and pretty soon I began to see what they meant. Besides, I remembered the way Kittie had looked the day

before. I put on a calm, superior expression, as if what I had done had been easy.

"But you don't know yet how many pounds she has lost," I told them, trying to keep pride out of my voice. I didn't know myself, but they did, and they answered like a Greek chorus.

"Eight-e-e-n!" they said, and they drew the word out like molasses candy when you pull it. "We asked the infirmarians."

I will admit to the gentle reader that I nearly fell off my chair when I heard that. Eighteen pounds lost in less than three weeks! No wonder Kittie James had looked slender and willowy!

Then my chest swelled with satisfaction, and you can see for yourself that it had cause. To take Kittie James in hand, and to get eighteen pounds off her in three weeks by feeding her with everything she loved, was a brand-new idea, and it was all my own. I don't believe any one ever thought of it before. Of course, as I strive to be honest, even with myself, I will admit that I hadn't really thought it out in detail. It was just instinct. But it got results, which is all one ought to ask of any idea. I told the girls there was more to the matter than they knew, which was true. I said the real name of the Epsilon Sigma was the Eating Society, which was true, too. Then I frowned as if I felt dis-

appointed, and I sat thinking hard for a moment, and not one of them dared to speak. Finally I let my face clear. I felt another instinct stirring in me.

"Eighteen pounds is not enough," I said, firmly. "It's got to be twenty. I'll give the biggest banquet of all to-night, and invite you three girls and Kittie and the Epsilon Sigma. We'll eat all that's left of George Morgan's box. There's heaps. By to-morrow Kittie will lose the other two pounds."

And you'd better believe she did!

IV

WHEN CHURCHYARDS YAWN

ONCE, when I was a little girl, three whole years younger than I am now, Sister Estelle wrote this sentence in my autograph album:

"May angels ever guide your pen."

Sometimes they do. I can almost feel them guiding it; and beautiful flowers of thought fall on the snowy pages before me, and I write so fast my hand gets covered with ink up to the wrist, and I have a dreadful time afterward, with pumice-stone. Even when angels are not guiding, though, I usually have two beautiful hopes sprouting in my breast when I begin my work. One is the hope of making it true to life; well do I realize that this is the highest art.

My second hope is that Sister Irmingarde will read it aloud to our literary class. She does, sometimes, read a girl's work when it

is very good. She hasn't read anything of mine for ages, though she told me with her own lips that several of my efforts "held striking examples of what to do and what to avoid in fiction." But I've got to write this piece of literature without either an angel or a hope. I know already that it is not going to be true to life, and that Sister Irmingarde is not going to read it aloud to the class. And the only example in it is Mabel Blossom, who is, indeed, a terrible one.

Not that the chapter isn't going to be good. It's going to have a ruin in it, and a churchyard, and a ghost, and grim, mysterious blood-curdling happenings. If those don't make a good chapter I don't know what does. And action! There's so much action that the mere memory of all that happened that ne'er-to-be-forgotten Hallowe'en night makes me feel tired now! As for Mabel Blossom, she's black and blue yet, from the exercise she got. But a story with a ghost in it can't very well be "true to life," can it? And, woe is me! it has wickedness in it, too; and Sister Irmingarde shrinks from wickedness the way a sensitive plant shrinks when you put your foot on it.

You can see how discouraging all this is, but I've got to write just the same. My art is

before all, and whenever a plot is inside of me it has to come out, no matter what it is. Not even wickedness can stop me. Only last New-year's Day I wrote this sentence in my resolution-book. It was one of seventeen, but it came first:

"*There is no subject in life that I will not write about before I get through.*"

I don't think I ever made a resolution that was so interesting. The more I thought of it, the more I liked it. I read it aloud right away to Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce, and Maudie clapped her hands; but Mabel went to her room and began to pack her trunk. She knew it meant that I would probe deeper than ever into her soul, and read her thoughts before she knew she had any; and well indeed might Mabel Blossom tremble. You see, Maudie and Mabel and I run the class, but our influences are different. I am the girl who thinks of intellectual things, and does them. Maudie is the girl who thinks of spiritual things and does them. Mabel Blossom, alas! alack! is the one who sometimes thinks of wicked things, and does them, and gets the rest of us into trouble. Yet we love her. I wonder why? I will analyze her sinful heart, and perhaps we will learn.

Mabel doesn't like this. I let her read all I write just as fast as I write it, so she can fix

her mind on higher things; but she 'most always feels disapproving and cross over what I say about her, so I'm afraid it doesn't really develop her spiritual nature much. Still, of course, I have to keep right on holding the mirror up to her, as Shakespeare says. To make everything clear, I will now describe the difference between Mabel and Maudie, as they look to the piercing gaze of an eye that sees into the deepest recesses of human beings. I mean my eye. The gentle reader ought to know that without being told, but I read it to Mabel, and she didn't.

When I am with Maudie we talk about life, and ideals, and the community spirit of helpfulness, and the hundred best books and what they do to you, and the growth of the soul. I can actually feel my soul grow while Maudie talks; sometimes it stretches and stretches till I think she must be blowing it up, the way a boy blows a toy balloon. The minute Maudie comes into my room evenings I can feel my soul begin to spread; and sometimes, though I never hinted it to Maudie, it makes me feel tired and nervous. Maudie is interested in her soul all the time, and I am interested in my soul some of the time. I suppose that's the difference. Mabel Blossom doesn't seem to be much interested in her soul any of the time.

When Mabel comes to see me we always laugh a lot, and we talk about spreads and the convent clubs and my stories and Mabel's patients—the ones she is going to have when she's a doctor—and what she's going to do to them; and I feel the way you feel when you put on a wrapper at night, and sit down before the open fire with your feet on the fender—warm and comfy and rested—and my moral nature slumbers. If Maudie Joyce said, "Let's cut lessons to-morrow, and sneak into town and have tea and cakes and jam at Roberti's," I'd be so surprised I'd fall off my chair at first. Then I would get up and show Maudie how dreadful it was to break the rules and what it would do to the soul, and we wouldn't go.

But if Mabel Blossom said it, somehow it would seem different—as if one needed exercise, you know, and nourishment, and the mind must not be overtaxed. Before I knew what I was doing I'd be at Roberti's drinking tea and eating six kinds of cake with jam spread on them, and laughing at the funny things Mabel said. I'd hardly even remember that it was wicked until one of the upper-class girls strolled in and caught us, and we were on our way back to St. Catharine's on the trolley, seeing the clusters of birches by the roadside that looked like groups of young novices, and shadows that seemed like Sister

Irmingarde's black veil, and listening to the little moaning winds among the trees, like the voices of nuns discouraged over their pupils.

Isn't that a pretty way to describe the way our guilty consciences work as we go home through the woods at twilight? Mabel Blossom says I mustn't point out such things; but if I don't the gentle reader may skip them.

Mabel came to me one day in October, looking important. She found me sitting under a willow on the bank of the river that flows through the convent grounds. I had Shakespeare in one hand and the Bible in the other, for I am forming my literary style on them. I was feeling dreadfully depressed because I couldn't decide whether to keep to one of them alone, or make my style a mixture of both. You can imagine how unsettling and mournful that was, with a lot of dead autumn leaves on the ground, too. I wasn't a bit glad to see Mabel. I would have enjoyed Maudie more just then, for my soul couldn't have felt any worse than it did. But, of course, I moved over on the bench so Mabel could sit down, though I laid aside my books "with visible reluctance," the way heroines do in stories. Mabel didn't mind. She never does. Her soul is not sensitive like mine and she was just bursting with a plan.

"May Iverson," she said, "do you want a new experience—the kind you've never had before?"

I did. I always did, and right well did Mabel Blossom know it. She fixed me with her glittering eye, like the Ancient Mariner.

"Will you promise solemnly to do it, and not to tell a living soul, except the girls who are in it, too, till it's all over? Cross your heart?" she asked.

"Is it wicked?" I inquired.

"It is," said Mabel Blossom.

I promised.

"It's this," said Mabel Blossom, with terrible coolness. "Kittie James, and Mabel Muriel Murphy, and Janet Trelawney, and Adeline Thurston, and I are going to the ruined church on Hallowe'en, at midnight. When we get there we're going to ask the spirits the names of our future husbands!"

I gasped. Then I picked up my Bible and pulled an expression of disapproval over my features, and looked just as much like Sister Edna as I could.

"You know perfectly well, Mabel Blossom," I said, coldly, "that you can't do such a thing. It's against the rules. Besides, there's no way of getting out at midnight. The doors are all locked and the portress carries the keys."

Mabel knew this, but the reader doesn't, so I have to put it in here. I didn't really say that about the keys to Mabel. I just said she couldn't do it. She knew why.

Mabel looked stubborn. She thought she was looking firm, but I have to tell what the effect really was. She made her lips into a little straight streak across her face, and dragged her eyebrows over her nose. I wish I could do it. Then she said:

"I told you it was wicked. That's where the wickedness comes in."

That's usually where Mabel's wickedness comes in—breaking the rules. She waited a minute; then she said, in cross tones:

"Well, are you coming, or aren't you?"

I kept on hesitating. You can see how terrifying the idea was, but you can't imagine all the horror of it, for you don't know about that haunted ruin. It was a little country church about a mile from the convent, and it had been built ages and ages ago—as much as fifty years, I think. It had never been consecrated and used, for it was found that the ground was "unhallowed"; and there were all sorts of thrilling stories about it. We used to take new girls there at twilight, the very first thing, and tell the stories to them, and watch their shudderings.

One legend was that lost souls had claimed the church and now held service in it. There was a little churchyard around it. The windows were gone, the south wall had fallen, and the old cellar had become a big, bottomless hole. There was a cracked bell in the little steeple, and it rang at night sometimes, in a high wind; then the country folks said the devil was ringing it to call his own around him.

This was the place where Mabel Blossom expected me to go at midnight and ask the spirits about my future husband. The thought made my blood sing in my ears and the soles of my feet feel prickly—but I wanted to go, dreadfully. While I was thinking it over, and remembering the awful things I had heard, Mabel Blossom was watching me, and smiling cool, superior smiles. Finally she got up.

"Oh, come on, May," she said. "It wouldn't be any fun without you; and you can write about it if we don't die."

This sounded like the whistle before the train starts. You know how it makes you feel—that you've got to get on the train right away. I got on. That means I yielded. Then we put our heads together and made our plans. I will not repeat them here. Suffice to say, as real writers put it, we arranged everything When

we came up againt a problem Mabel Blossom's mind could not solve, need I tell whose mind did solve it? It was mine. Mabel asked me to tell Maudie Joyce and get her to come with us. I did. She came. There are golden instants when Maudie forgets about her soul, and this was one of them.

The night of Hallowe'en fell. Don't you think that sounds better than to say it came? We went to bed at nine o'clock, as usual. We had to. We got in with our clothes on, and we were all drawing deep breaths of sleeping innocence when Sister Edna made her final rounds, just before the Great Silence. Then the convent lights everywhere went out, and the darkness got thicker and blacker, and the sorrows of my past life came and sat on my bed in rows, the way they do, and my conscience gnawed on the thought of what we were going to do like a mouse gnawing a hole in the floor. I could almost hear it.

We had to wait till ten, and the only way I could tell when ten came was to listen till a distant clock struck. I can 'most always hear it strike, but this night I thought it never would. I was sure it would strike five or six, if it struck anything again; but at last the ten strokes sounded, slowly and solemnly, and I got up and

crept out of the room like a wraith. Every girl at St. Catharine's has a room to herself, but the rooms are small and close together, on both sides of a long hall, and the two girls on the right and left of me were dreadfully inquisitive and always listening for sounds. Sometimes when I woke at night I made noises just to puzzle them—upset a chair or threw a shoe at the wall—but I didn't to-night. I hardly dared to breathe, and I believe it took me ten minutes to open my door and get over the sill. I'd turn the door-knob a little and wait till the echoes died away, and then turn some more.

The hall was like a long, black tunnel with a slippery bottom, but I slid along it in my stocking feet, holding my shoes in my hand. I was afraid I'd step on a pin, but there weren't any—fancy Sister Italia letting pins lie on her polished floor that is the pride of her life! Then I thought of mice, and the thought was so terrible that I stuck my mind on the pin again. Please read that sentence twice; it's worth it. Even Mabel Blossom says so.

At last I got to our meeting-place—a window opening on a balcony at the far end of the east hall, away from sleepers. All the girls were there except Maudie Joyce. Maudie's con-

science had been gnawing, too, but not enough to keep her from us. She arrived about a second after I did. Our presence seemed to be a great comfort to our dear companions. Kittie James caught my hand and held it tight, and I distinctly heard Mabel Blossom draw a deep, gurgling breath of relief. Even her dauntless soul did not yearn to lead that group out of the second-floor window, and down the side of the balcony, through the ivy, across the convent grounds, and a whole mile in the dark to a haunted church. There are limits to dauntlessness.

Now that we were there, though, Mabel led the way, in a careless manner, as if she had meant to all along, and we followed her. We got down safely, but I'm sure some of Mother Ernesta's pet ivy on that wall won't cling much any more. Kittie James fell when she was about six feet from the ground, and she started to shriek, but Maudie had presence of mind and caught her by the throat before much of the shriek got out. We counted noses, and when we knew we were together, with no loved one lost in the ivy, we started for the ruin.

I will now stop and describe the scene, though I know the reader is in suspense. It was just the kind of a night for Hallowe'en—"when churchyards yawn and graves give up their

dead." The sky was covered with moving clouds. A cold wind blew across the fields, and there was a tiny little piece of moon that looked like Maudie Joyce's curved pearl pin. It kept peeping in and out among the clouds. When we especially needed light it stayed behind them; but when there was something grim and grisly ahead of us, that moon came out and made it look worse. A year ago I would have said that it was like a silver horn or a golden crescent. My expressions are more original now. I would be sorry if no one but me noticed it, though already I realize that much of an artist's greatest art is lost to the thoughtless reader.

The girls were huddled together in a group, white and scared, staring at the ruined church, just ahead of us, and afraid to go one step farther. It was indeed a wild and lonely scene, with the light of that elfish moon touching a bit of the belfry, and everything else looking shadowy and terrible, like things in troubled dreams. The wind was beginning to moan among the tall pine trees in the churchyard, and, while we stood shivering and hesitating, a screech-owl in the belfry let out a frightful screech.

Of course we knew what it was; we had heard lots of screech-owls before. They love the trees

along our river, and half a dozen of them live there. But we weren't expecting any noise then, so we all jumped and Kittie James screeched too. The other girls were sorry for Kittie. I was not. Though I am only sixteen, I am a student of life, and this thought came to me: If that little owl was proud of his screeching, how perfectly *dreadful* he must have felt when Kittie James screeched so much better. For of course screeching was, in Kittie's life, "a thing apart," as Shakespeare says, but it was his "whole existence." I quote more from Shakespeare than I do from the Bible, because Shakespeare is so coldly intellectual.

While the thought about the screech was in my mind, and I was wishing I had a pencil and some paper to write it down so I wouldn't forget it, and almost forgetting entirely about the haunted ruin, Mabel Blossom spoke up, in distinct but trembling words.

"I will go first," she said. "I will ask the first question. The rest of you needn't come with me, if you are afraid."

She started off toward the ruin with a rush, as if she had picked herself up and thrown herself at it. I knew why. It was because she was scared to death and didn't dare to go slowly. The other girls thought it was because she was

so brave. Don't you see how much better I understand things than they do? Maudie and I went after her with languid steps; I wasn't a bit anxious to get nearer to the ruin. Of course the other girls followed us. I guess they thought it was better to go with us into the jaws of death, and perhaps slide down, than to wait behind and die alone. The minute Mabel got to the wall she leaned across it and hung down over the awful blackness below. I was right behind her, and I distinctly saw her shut her eyes. The owl hadn't screeched again after Kittie had discouraged him, and now there wasn't a sound except Kittie's hard breaths. The moon had gone behind a cloud again. We heard wings flutter—the owl, perhaps, or bats in the ruin—and the scampering of little feet below us, like the feet of mice.

Suddenly Mabel spoke up, loud and clear, in the invocation Adeline Thurston had written for her:

> "Oh, ruin, ruin, tell me true
> What I, Mabel Blossom, ask of you,—
> The name of my future husband."

We stood close behind her and held our breaths, and waited for what would happen. The wings and feet stopped. I never listened to so much

stillness, and then to so many echoes. It seemed as if the whole wide world must have heard Mabel's words going down into that abyss like thunderclaps, and coming up again in waves of sound that rolled around us.

Kittie James says it was three hours before anything else happened, but really in about one minute a low, wailing voice came to us from below. This is what it said:

"J-o-h-n G-o-r-d-o-n."

The gentle reader won't believe this, but it happened. You have heard of heroines being frozen to the spot when something terrible occurred. That's the way I was—frozen. I could not stir an inch, and I felt my knotted and combined locks parting, exactly the way Shakespeare says they do.

I guess the other girls felt the way I did; there wasn't a sound among them. Even Kittie stopped breathing; not a leaf or a petticoat rustled. I tried to look around, but my eyes wouldn't move. My eyeballs felt like frozen gum-drops. Then we heard a queer, heavy sound, and there in front of us was Mabel Blossom, stretched out on the ground, flat on her face. She lay perfectly still; we knew she was dead.

That moved the girls! They started off in

every direction, in leaping bounds, as if the ground was rising under them and they had to get up first; and as they ran they uttered choked, horrible noises. They were trying to scream and they couldn't. It was like a thousand nightmares. Maudie and I bent over Mabel, and each caught her by one foot. Then we ran, too, taking Mabel with us. It wasn't easy, for Mabel is plump and the fields were rough; but we were stronger than we knew. Even if she was dead, we couldn't leave Mabel to the lost souls in that ruin, so we ran and dragged, and dragged and ran. Once Mabel's hair caught on the stump of a tree, and we had to stop, and another time her blouse caught on something and tore straight down the front before we could get her away. All the time I thought of how the evil spirits might pursue us for robbing them of their prey, and of the shapes they might take. It is strange, indeed, how many different thoughts the mind can think at such a time.

While we were pulling the blouse I heard panting breaths around us. At first I was afraid to look up. Who wouldn't be? I pause to inquire. But finally I did, and I saw that it was only the rest of the girls running behind us and beside us. We were all together again. Everybody was running except the stark burden

we dragged after us, but that was getting over the ground nice and fast, too. By and by it began to kick so we could hardly hold the feet. We stopped again, and dropped them, and saw what had happened. We had been dragging Mabel's face through the wet grass because we picked her up by the wrong end, and were in such a hurry. But it had revived her, so you see it was really the best thing we could have done, though we hadn't thought of that at the time. We had just trusted to instinct, which it is truly said rarely fails the young.

Pretty soon Mabel began to moan, and at last she sat up and wiped her face and asked what had happened, and where she was. She wasn't very far from the ruin. We hadn't dragged her a long distance, after all, though it had seemed miles. The haunted church lay close behind us, spectral and terrible. We could see it by looking back.

After a few minutes Mabel got on her feet, but she couldn't walk, and she begged us not to leave her there to die alone. We had to wait till she was stronger, and while we were waiting I began to get calmer, and finally I had an idea. I hastened to share it with my dear companions.

"I don't believe we heard any voice at all," I said. "I believe we imagined it because we

were frightened, or perhaps we hypnotized ourselves. I'm going back to try again."

It was not a noble courage that moved me, but that which is stronger than life—my art. All of a sudden it seemed impossible for me to go on without knowing what was down in the awful bowels of that ruin. Besides, how could I write about it if I didn't know? None of the girls offered to come back with me, but I didn't care. Almost before they could offer (not *quite* before, but *almost*) I was running back alone. In a very few minutes I reached the ruin, and, without waiting a second, I called down into it over the old wall, the way Mabel had done. The wind was getting worse. It sounded like a chorus of warning voices in the trees, but I didn't stop to listen. I said my verses in a loud, determined voice:

"Ruin, ruin, tell me true.
I, May Iverson, ask of you
The name of my future husband."

At first there wasn't a sound in reply. But just as I began to feel my spine getting a little warmer that terrible voice rose from the abyss again, and this time it wailed like a banshee:

"F-r-e-d-e-r-i-c-k M-a-n-s-o-n."

Don't ask me what happened next. It would

take a real writer, like Edgar Allan Poe, to tell you. Besides, I don't remember. I only know that I got back to the girls somehow, and that we stumbled across the cold, wet fields for centuries and centuries and centuries. At last I thought I had always been running away from a ghost, through a dark night, and that I must keep on doing it till the world came to an end.

I was going to shriek with the awfulness of it (yes, I really was) when I looked up and saw the blessed old convent buildings snuggled together in front of us, with our beautiful cross on the chapel spire pointing peacefully to the stars that were beginning to come out. I knew nothing could happen to us then, so I stopped to breathe, and the others did, too, and pretty soon my mind got quieter. It went to work again right away, thinking about Frederick Manson. He is a boy I simply *detest*, and the girls know it. I see him when I am home on vacations, but I never answer the letters he writes me. He has no soul for art, and he is not intellectual. He makes me feel the way you do when you peel a peach or draw your finger-nail across a crack in the window-pane. The thought of marrying him was so terribly bitter that I sat right down on the wet grass and began to cry. I never felt so nervous in my life.

"I won't marry Frederick Manson!" I cried. "I won't! I won't! I'd rather die, right here, without waiting!"

Maudie Joyce is a Southern girl, from Virginia. Once in a very, very long time, when she gets terribly excited, she talks with a kind of queer Southern drawl and accent, the way her old black mammy nurse used to talk to her when she was a tiny girl. She sat down on the grass beside me, and put her arms tight around me, and rocked me back and forth.

"Do'n you be frightened, honey," she said, over and over. "I ain't gwine let any boy mah'y you if you all do'n like him. Do'n you cry. Do'n you cry."

I knew she would save me, so I didn't cry any more. The other girls stood and looked on without sympathy. They had cold, blue noses and wet feet. Mabel Blossom told me later, with her own lips, that they all thought Maudie and I ought to have waited till we got indoors to talk about my marriage. But Maudie comforted me so much that pretty soon I felt better and got up. We all crept to the convent balcony, and climbed through what was left of the ivy, and got in the hall and reached our rooms—and not a soul heard us! It was too good to be true. I don't suppose the Sisters would ever have

known anything about it if Kittie James hadn't had hysterics in her room just as soon as Maudie left her there alone. Sister Edna heard the hysterics—every one in that wing heard them, I think—so the whole story came out. We were all visited in our rooms, and given baths and rubbings and hot drinks, and looked at with sad, reproachful eyes. But the Sisters didn't say much that night; it was too late.

If the reader will let me, I will draw a veil over the tragic happenings that followed, the next day. I could describe them, but I don't like to write about sad things at this time; my pen turns more to gaiety. Maudie and I had the worst time of all, I think, for Sister Irmingarde told us she had depended on us to use our influence for good at St. Catharine's, and that we had both failed her, and she feared she could never depend on us again. You can imagine how such words made us feel. We cried till we were sick. Maudie had to go to the infirmary. I didn't; I cried just as much, but I have a stronger constitution. Besides, I know that suffering is good for my art, and that always comforts me, right away. Sometimes it comforts me so much that I can't keep on suffering; then my emotions are strange and puzzling. Even I can hardly describe them. Mabel Blossom was sent to

Mother Ernesta, and we didn't see her for hours. When she finally came into the study-hall, late in the afternoon, her eyes were red, too, and she buried herself in her books, as real authors say, and didn't speak to anybody.

But what worried us most of all was the memory of that dreadful voice. When a ghost has talked to you, and told you real things about your most intimate interests, you go around afterward with sinking feelings in your stomach, and you can't sleep nights. All the girls who went to the ruin got nervous, and went to the infirmary, like Maudie. Finally Mabel and I were the only girls not on the sick-list. Kittie James was so nervous she had to have one of the infirmarians sleep in the same room with her. Kittie said it was dreadful to wake at night and be thinking of beautiful, peaceful things, like a box from home, and then suddenly turn and look into the fleshless sockets of a ghost who was grinding the words "Frederick Manson" between his bony jaws. Of course that gave me hysterics, right off.

The Sisters forbade us to talk about the ruin or the ghost or to think about them, so we stopped talking; but our thoughts worked harder than ever, as they always do when you are not allowed to talk about things. At last the nuns

put their heads together, and sent for every girl, and talked to her alone. When that happens each heart gives up its maiden secrets.

Three days after Hallowe'en, the girls in the infirmary were told to get up and dress for supper. The nuns said something interesting was going to happen in the refectory, and no one should miss it. The girls rose, pale and wan, and when the supper-bell rang we all went to the refectory together with a slow gait, like a band of Minims stepping heavenward. It is not amusing in the refectory. We are not allowed to talk while we are eating. Usually Sister Italia reads an improving book, and of course that's enough to discourage any appetite, unless there's sardines. We were sure the interesting thing couldn't be food, because we know exactly what the food is going to be. Monday night, cold lamb and bread and butter and prunes and milk; Tuesday, cold beef and biscuits and canned peaches and milk; Wednesday—but I will spare the gentle reader. We have "simple, nourishing meals," as our prospectus says, and plenty of them; but I notice that whenever I talk about our food at the convent my father groans. He is a general in the army, too, and you know what privations they have. Of course we get lots of boxes from home, and they contain the cakes

and pickles and jam that growing girls require.

We sat down without zest, and got ready to put food into ourselves absent-mindedly, the way you put coals on the fire, and I was just wondering whether we were having little peaches or big apricots when I noticed that all the girls were staring toward the foot of the long room. I stared, too. Well indeed I might.

A big canvas was stretched the whole width of the refectory, against the south wall. On that canvas, in black crayon sketches, was the entire story of our Hallowe'en visit to the haunted church. We hadn't done a single thing that wasn't there. The first picture showed us climbing down the ivy. In the second we were running across the fields. In the third we were at the ruins, and Mabel was calling down to the ghost. The fourth showed Mabel fainting, and in the fifth we were dragging her across the fields on her face and holding her feet, which looked dreadfully big. They are, too. Then a picture showed me calling to the ghost, with Shakespeare under my arm. I don't think that was very good, for I didn't have Shakespeare under my arm. Another picture showed Maudie and me sitting on the ground, and Maudie comforting me, and there was a balloon thing com-

ing out of Maudie's mouth, saying, "Do'n you cry, honey, I ain't gwine let you mah'y him."

After that came our return up the ivy, with the ivy all hanging in shreds and patches, like shoe-strings. In the corner of every picture was a perfectly horrified little moon, looking down on us with eyes almost as big as his face, and his expression different every time. He was weeping over me and Maudie, in our picture. But the last two sketches were the ones that drew and held our unbelieving eyes. In the first Mabel Blossom was giving a dollar to Jonas, our old head gardener! In the other—the last one of all—Jonas was down in the church cellar, reading a list of names by the light of a tallow dip, and shouting "Frederick Manson" up at me! The little moon had thrown his head back and was shouting, too, and the little stars were crowding around to listen

Then, indeed, we knew all. The ghost was old Jonas, and Mabel Blossom had hired him to be a ghost. Was this perfidy? I do not pause for a reply. I know too well what it would be. But we had our revenge; for, after all, the ghost had frightened Mabel even more than he did us. Jonas changed his voice so dreadfully that Mabel thought the ghost had destroyed him and taken his place, as a punishment for her. She told

us so afterward, as soon as we would let her tell us anything. At first we wouldn't.

After we had looked at the pictures, and nobody had said anything because nobody was allowed to, Mabel got up from her place at the table and made a speech. She said she wanted to ask our pardon. She had played a very silly joke, and she was sorry. She hoped we would forgive her. She would try to do better. Her face was very red. Then she sat down, and Sister Italia said grace, and we all began to eat, casting ever and anon disapproving looks at Mabel Blossom. But we felt ever so much more cheerful.

It was a long, long time before we heard who made the drawings. That secret was kept locked in the nuns' breasts. When we did hear, months afterward, we could hardly believe it. I will let the gentle reader get the same shock.

It was Sister Irmingarde! Mabel had confessed to her, and Sister Irmingarde thought it would "remove the ghost impression most effectually" to do it in a funny way. She had studied art in Paris before she became a nun. So she made the drawings. Wasn't she clever? When I write my essay on Shakespeare I'm going to bring her in, too. For, like Shakespeare, Sister Mary Irmingarde sees into the deepest recesses of the human heart.

V

I INTRODUCE BEAUTY CULTURE

THE idea came to me in the classroom one day while Kittie James was reciting, and, like most of my ideas, it came very suddenly. One moment my mind was a perfect blank. The next it was working so hard I thought Janet Trelawney, who sat behind me, would hear it buzz.

My mind usually is a blank when Kittie James is reciting. Poor Kittie is not a bright student, alas! and of course I always know a great deal more about the lesson than she can possibly tell Sister Irmingarde. So I let my intellect rest. That day Kittie was talking about the ancient Greeks and their manners and customs. She seemed to think they were some kind of weird prehistoric animals, like the megatheriums and pterodactyls we read about in our geology. Even that impression was an intellectual improvement for Kittie though, for

only last week she told me with her own lips that she didn't believe there ever had been any ancient Greeks, anyway. She said she was perfectly sure the men who wrote school-books put in the ancient Greeks to fill up—when their imaginations got tired after inventing so much about the earth being a round ball, and the stars being billions of miles away, and things like that. She said she knew full well those things were not true either, though she rarely said so because most people believe everything they read and there is no sense in arguing with them. She said the only person she ever opened her heart to about her lessons was George Morgan.

George is her brother-in-law because he married her sister Josephine. Kittie and I adore him and he is simply heavenly about sending us boxes. Kittie said George laughed at first when she told him she didn't believe the things in her school-books; but when she asked him if he thought the long flash of a falling star was really the light from a burning world that had been destroyed millions of years ago he looked serious. Kittie said she couldn't light a match in her room at night without having Sister Irmingarde see it that very instant from *her* room 'way off in another wing of the convent. So Kittie added that no one could convince

her the light of that burning world was only reaching us now, because it had taken millions of years to make the weary journey. Kittie told me George admitted that astronomers had yet several things to learn, and that he didn't take much stock in them, either; and he added that personally he had few prejudices and would as soon listen to Kittie's theories as theirs.

This pleased Kittie very much, so she told him all her theories right off. They had a delightful and intellectual conversation, but it doesn't belong in this place, so I will not repeat it here. None of what I have said really belongs, but it doesn't have to. It is only put in for atmosphere, anyway, and to get the gentle reader even more interested in Kittie. There is one thing I must add, though, while I think of it. George told Kittie that very night that my fiction and her science were making life one glad, sweet song for him. Those were indeed his words, and they bring me right back to my fiction now, like the weary bird to its nest. But for fear the reader's mind may be a little confused by passing so swiftly from Kittie to the ancient Greeks and burning worlds and then back to Kittie I will repeat my opening remarks:

My mind was a perfect blank and Kittie was reciting about the ancient Greeks.

Suddenly a word caught my attention. It was *Beauty*. Kittie said the Greeks loved beauty so much that they were willing to give their whole lives to the pursuit of it. That is exactly the way I feel a great deal of the time, so I began to think about the Greeks and beauty and how important beauty is and how it refreshes the eye and the soul, too. No matter how tired I am, for instance, I always feel rested when I look at Sister Irmingarde. There is something in her eyes and in her face—but I will not begin to tell about that now, for if I did I should never get back to Kittie and the ancient Greeks. However, I looked at Sister Irmingarde for a few minutes and felt rested and refreshed, as usual. Then I looked at my dear companions, putting the ancient Greeks up behind them as a kind of a background—like an imaginary frieze, you know—and the shock was so great I almost groaned aloud. It was as if I had been living blind among horrors and had suddenly been given sight.

I began with Kittie. Kittie has never been beautiful, though she has a lovely nature and a sweet expression. Several years ago, before she got so fat, she used to look really soulful at times. But no fat person can possibly look soulful, as I have oft pointed out to Kittie. As I looked at

her now I saw clearly that she had almost obscured her soul, as it were, by chocolate cake and pickles and marmalade and fudge, for next to her dear mother Kittie loves rich food. Elsewhere, as real writers say, I have told how I "reduced" Kittie and took off twenty pounds of her flesh in three weeks. But by this time Kittie, alas! had gained them back again.

Much as I loved Kittie, I averted my eyes from her and looked at Maudie Joyce. Maudie is usually rather nice to look at. But now she was studying hard, with her left hand thrust through her hair, and her hair all rumpled, and her knees crossed (in spite of all the nuns have said about *that*), and her teeth chewing her lower lip the way they do when she is nervous. So I had to stop looking at her, for beauty was not in her, as the poet says.

Then, like the Greeks of old, I went on a quest for beauty. Of course I sat in my seat just the same. It was only my eyes that moved—but they roamed from face to face in that great classroom and with every roam my heart grew heavier. I have already told my gentle readers how keen my insight is. They will not be surprised to learn, therefore, that as I looked from face to face I knew just why each one was not

beautiful; and, what was much more important, I knew what to do to improve it.

Kittie James was fat, as I have said, and her complexion was pasty because she ate too much. Adeline Thurston was round-shouldered from writing poetry. Mabel Blossom had chewed the inside of her face and pulled at her lips and ears till it was hard to imagine how they would look if she ever let them alone. Maudie did the same thing, though she had a queenly carriage. Mabel Muriel Murphy, though neat and tidy, looked as if she hadn't any emotions. She was just placid and peaceful, like a cow contented with her cud. (That is more alliteration. Please read it aloud and see how nice it sounds.) Janet Trelawney was too thin. She had no graceful curves. And so it went. Every girl I looked at had something the matter with her. Even my own appearance had faults, though I forgot about these till Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and the other girls pointed them out to me in the evening. But of this more anon, as real writers say.

I hope the gentle reader knows me well enough by this time to realize that, after I had grasped all this, I did not remain idle. Nay, I called a meeting of the girls in our special set that very night. I asked them to come to my room so

we could talk as long as we pleased without being interrupted.

They were not very enthusiastic when they came. You see, I had to make them understand right off how vital the matter was, and to do that I had to tell them immediately what was the matter with their looks. I did it. I said it was necessary, of course, to be perfectly frank, no matter how much frankness hurt the victim. I said I was like a surgeon, causing pain for the patient's good. Then I told the girls the worst things about themselves, and said I'd tell them more when we met and how to remedy these sad defects.

They were not a bit grateful. When they came in the evening, they all talked at once and wasted a great deal of time telling me what was the matter with my looks, instead of getting right to work on themselves, the way I wanted them to do. But I finally comforted them by saying that I knew I looked worse than any one else. I didn't think I did, really, away down in what Mr. James calls my "abysmal self"; but they did; and they all gave so many reasons for thinking it that I simply couldn't fix my mind on the ancient Greeks for almost an hour.

At last they let me talk a while, and I told them what a wonderful power beauty was, and

that there wasn't any of it at St. Catharine's so far, but how we might get some if we tried. Mabel Blossom spoke right up and said she thought so, too, and that she had an idea. Usually I am a little afraid of Mabel's ideas. They are not practical. But she seemed very much in earnest, so I invited her to express it.

Mabel got up very solemnly and said everything I had said was true, and that there was much to be done, and we must all put our shoulders to the wheel. But she said if every girl worked by herself nothing would be accomplished. Each girl would put cold cream on her face for a few nights and then forget about it. But, Mabel said, if the whole school worked on *one* girl the results ought to be glorious. Everybody cheered that and they all talked at once, but Mabel Blossom lifted her lily hand and checked them, for she had more to say. As I looked at her I had a strange sinking sensation—for full well I knew now what this would be. I was right, too, as I most always am. It is wonderful how I can tell what the girls are going to do even before they do it. This is partly, of course, because I know the girls so well; but most of my strange insight is due to the artist's knowledge of the poor, weak, Human Heart.

While I was thinking these thoughts Mabel went right on talking. She said that as I was the girl who thought of the plan I ought to be the subject of the experiment. She said that was only fair to me—to let me be the first girl to get the good of my own idea. Besides, she said, I had confessed that I needed it most. I tried to speak and tell her I didn't want to be so selfish; but she raised her voice and made a motion that I should be the girl, and Maudie Joyce seconded it, and in another minute it was carried unanimously. Perhaps the gentle reader thinks he can imagine my emotions, but he can't, so I will describe them myself.

It is a strange and unsettling feeling to have a beautiful idea and tell it to one's dear companions, and then have them take it and change it so one hardly knows it oneself. I didn't exactly want to go on with the plan, and yet I couldn't stand the thought of dropping it and having the girls laugh at me. I had wanted to improve the looks of the whole school. Now the whole school wanted to improve *my* looks. I had wanted them to put their shoulders to the wheel. Now they wanted me to be the wheel! Still, as Mabel Blossom pointed out, the principle was the same, and it was the principle that was important. Mabel said that

after the school had made me perfect they would have a model to go by and could make themselves perfect, too, avoiding the mistakes they would naturally make at first with me. She said sometimes whole features were changed by beauty-work, and of course errors were apt to creep in; but she was sure the girls would do the best they could. She said she thought the way to begin was for me to stand out in the center of the room and let the girls study me, and discuss my physical faults and how to correct them. She put that motion and Janet Trelawney seconded it, and it was carried unanimously like the first—and all the girls seemed perfectly delighted.

Was that fair? I would pause for a reply, but it is not worth while. Full well do I know what the reply could be.

Finally they let me speak. I said I thought it would be better to rest now, after doing so much, and begin our new work the next night. But Mabel said no, and the other girls agreed with her. She said the time to begin was at once, while they were full of eagerness and enthusiasm, and would I please hurry and get into the middle of the room. She dragged a footstool forward and made me stand on it, and all the girls stood around and studied me and looked

more and more depressed; and ever and anon they shook their heads and sighed. Mabel reminded them of what I had suggested about being perfectly frank and using the surgeon's knife; and she told the girls not to mind my feelings, because everything they said, even if it seemed harsh and cruel, would be for my good.

For a while no one spoke. They all seemed too discouraged. But finally Adeline Thurston said that of course my feet were too big, but she didn't see that anything could be done about them. Mabel said, very crossly, that she didn't see what could be done, either, and that there was no sense in starting with the simply impossible things. She said it would be better to begin by telling me that the green dress I was wearing made my skin the color of a lemon, and she thought I ought to know it.

Maudie Joyce said it was the way I wore my hair that had always worried her more than anything else about me. She didn't think it went with the shape of my head. But when all the girls agreed to that, too, and Mabel pressed her to suggest something better, Maudie said she couldn't think of anything that would make my head a good shape and that she guessed the hair was like the feet—too hard to take up at first. Then there was a long silence and they

I MADE UP MY MIND NEVER TO HAVE ANOTHER IDEA IF I COULD HELP IT

all looked more discouraged than ever. I made up my mind that very minute never to have another idea if I could possibly help it.

Finally Kittie James said, timidly, that there was a curve in my chin that might make it look double when I was older, so all the girls made suggestions about this and agreed that I must give my chin fifty up-strokes with the backs of my hands every night and every morning. They passed that unanimously, too; and Mabel Muriel Murphy said my mouth was beginning to droop at the corners, and she thought fifty upward strokes night and morning might remedy that in a few years. She said she had seen her mother do it.

The girls were getting enthusiastic again. Maudie said one of my teeth was crooked, but she knew a dentist in Chicago who would straighten it while there was yet time if I would wear a wedge for three months. Mabel Muriel asked if anything could be done about my ears, and they decided nothing could without risking my hearing, but they advised me to wear my hair over them. Adeline Thurston said she had always thought it was a pity my hands were so large, but she supposed it was because I played the piano so much; and Kittie James asked if it wouldn't help my eyebrows to have about half

the hair taken out of them. Mabel Blossom said my eyes were all right, and it was lucky they were, with so much wrong in other places. But she added that they had a near-sighted look and I might form the habit of squinting if I wasn't careful. She said she knew one girl with eyes like mine who squinted so much no one could bear to look at her.

Kittie James said she wouldn't listen to anything about my eyes because she simply loved them. I looked gratefully at Kittie, but before the look really got over to her Kittie said she was afraid I would have to work hard before my carriage would be erect and graceful; and Maudie said specialists were doing wonders for noses now; and Janet Trelawney, who hadn't spoken before, but who looked more discouraged over me than 'most any one else, said that she thought it would help my general effect a lot if I didn't talk so fast. Kittie James spoke up again and said I was neat, *anyway*, and they all agreed that I was and seemed glad to be able to say something pleasant at last. Then they sat and looked at me a while and sighed and seemed more depressed than ever.

At last Adeline Thurston began to talk about my literary faults, but you'd better believe I stopped that and pointed out with icy dignity that

my looks and not my art were what they were there to criticize. Mabel Blossom agreed with me; and she reminded the girls that if they began to talk about my literary faults, too, they'd never get through.

That started them off again, and they got pencils and paper and took notes which I need not repeat here and made out a list of daily rules for me to follow. There were hundreds of rules when they got through, and the list looked miles long. I tore it up as soon as I was alone, but I remember some of the things I was to do. Here they are:

Walk five miles a day with a book on your head.

Push the corners of your mouth up every night and fasten them up with court-plaster.

Pull half your eyebrows out with pincers.

Sleep with a rubber band under your chin. Rub your chin every morning with a lump of ice as large as a hen's egg. Keep rubbing till the ice is melted.

Wear a Greek fillet around your hair and keep your head erect with a velvet strap from the fillet to the back of your collar.

Consult your companions before you buy a new dress, to be sure they can stand it.

There seemed millions of other things, but I was too hurt to pay much attention to them. I saw, however, that if I did even a quarter of

them every day I wouldn't have time to do anything else.

After they finished writing the things for me to do they were pretty tired and quiet for a while. I had a chance to say a few words myself and I said them. I said I was very much interested in all they had told me, but that it seemed a dreadful thing for me to be getting all the attention when others needed so much. I urged them again to go into the thing together. I pointed out how much more fun it would be to take the exercises at the same time, and do all the queer things together and then talk them over, than for one person to do it alone. Besides, I reminded them it would be very unpleasant for me, after I was perfect, to have to look at them the way they were now. Before I had finished talking half the girls came over to my side, and the end of it was that they all began to tell one another of serious faults they had observed in one another.

Then things got exciting. They forgot all about me, and I was glad they did for a few minutes. I sat back and looked on. I didn't say much more about how the girls looked. I had already told them most of the worst things; but different girls kept calling to me every minute to ask if something some one else said

was really true—and of course I usually had to agree, because it 'most always was true.

At last, out of all the confusion, we evolved a plan of work. We decided to keep the beauty culture right in our own class and to help each other all we could for one week. A list of recommendations was to be given to every single girl to suit her case, and she was to work as hard as she possibly could to correct the imperfection her dear companions couldn't stand. We saw from my list how impossible it would be to do everything, so each girl was to work on one or two vital things.

For example, Kittie James had to walk five miles a day with a rubber undervest on and not eat a thing except at the convent-table. Mabel Blossom had to do all her studying with her hands tied so she couldn't pull her features about. Adeline Thurston said she thought it would be simply fascinating at the end of the week to see how Mabel's features really looked. Adeline had to have a board between her shoulders all her free hours and practise walking two hours a day. Jennie Hartwell, whose hips were simply enormous, had to roll on her mattress one hundred times every morning and one hundred times every night. Mabel Muriel Murphy had to drink four quarts of hot water every day

to improve her complexion, and read Byron and Keats and Tennyson in the hope that they would stir up her emotions and give her an intelligent expression. That was *my* idea. Mabel Muriel didn't like it very much, but she had to do it just the same. I started her on Keats.

"St. Agnes Eve—ah, bitter chill it was.
The owl with all his feathers was a' cold."

I thought that poem would make Mabel Muriel cry if anything could, but it didn't. The only things that interested her were the "candied apple, quince, and plum" the heroine and hero ate. She read the description of the supper to Kittie James:

"With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon,
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From Silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon."

Those two girls were simply fascinated by that menu. They gave a convent spread two weeks later as near like it as they could. Mabel Muriel's rich father sent the things from Chicago. Most of us were sick after the supper—but this is not the place to describe the banquet nor our sufferings, terrible though they were. It

is very strange, but every time I write a chapter in my book I think of half a dozen things before I get through that would have been better to write about. This seems incredible, but it is indeed true.

Of course everything we did in our beauty treatment had to be done very quietly so as not to attract the attention of the nuns and worry them by making them imagine something was going on they didn't know about. For it is a sad fact that, no matter how many beautiful ideas we girls have at St. Catharine's, and how hard it is to carry them out, we have to keep up our regular school routine just the same. We try all our experiments in recreation-hours, and I suppose we wouldn't have much chance even then except that we have the beautiful system of self-government, which makes us responsible only to God and our consciences for what we do. As our consciences are always clear and our objects high, and we are really stepping heaven-ward the whole time, nobody fusses much unless we make serious mistakes. We don't very often; but several serious things happened during the beauty culture. The worst was that Jennie Hartwell fell out of bed while she was rolling a hundred times on her mattress to reduce her hips and broke her wrist. She didn't tell why

it happened, however, which was indeed noble of her. Then Kittie James caught cold and 'most got pneumonia from walking in her rubber undervest and getting overheated and sitting in a draught afterward; and I got so tired walking five miles every day, with books on my head instead of in my hand, where they should be, that I couldn't sleep nights and almost had nervous prostration.

But the worst thing of all happened without any of us noticing it at the time except Sister Irmingarde. Of course she noticed it. Sister Irmingarde really notices everything we do even when her eyes and her thoughts seem to be on higher things. All I was thinking of these days was how to do everything I had to do in class and on my beauty list. It took every minute of my spare time, and as things seemed to be the same with the other girls no one saw much of any one else. Besides, no one wanted to. I got so I didn't even care to meet one of the class on the grounds, for as soon as I did she stood me up against a tree or something and looked me over to see if I was making progress. And while she did it she repeated all my imperfections till I got dreadfully tired hearing about them.

All the girls were bad enough, but the girls of my special set were the worst. You see, they loved

me most, so of course they could say the hardest things. When they did that I told them all over again about their faults, and by the time we separated every one was angry. I got so I hid when I saw any of them coming, and a good many other girls seemed to feel the way I did about it. So instead of seeing groups scattered over the convent grounds, as in the dear old days of last month, everywhere I looked I saw one girl alone. Sometimes she was taking calisthenic exercises. Sometimes she was practising a stately walk, with her chin up and her shoulders back. Sometimes she was giving herself facial massage. Sometimes she was inhaling and exhaling five hundred deep breaths, as Janet Trelawney had to do every night and morning. Sometimes I would see Mabel Muriel Murphy under the willow with a mirror in her hand practising "assuming an intelligent expression." Mabel Muriel had to do that every day. But whoever the girl was, and whatever she was doing, she was *alone*. The only time the girls of our class got together was during recitation-hours or in the study-hall.

At such times Sister Irmingarde studied us with her quiet, watchful, thoughful look, which grew a little more serious as the days went on. Once or twice when I glanced at her I noticed that she had caught a bit of her lower lip between

her teeth, which was a way she had when she was puzzled and was thinking something out. At last she sent for me and asked me why I was alone so much of late. I told her frankly that it was because I was the victim of painful physical blemishes which distressed my dear friends, so I was keeping by myself till I got over them. Then she sent for Mabel Blossom and asked the same question, and Mabel said she had twisted her features so much that she was ashamed to let her classmates see them. After that she sent for Mabel Muriel Murphy and Maudie Joyce and Kittie James.

Mabel Muriel told Sister Irmingarde she had decided never again to associate with her dear classmates till she had acquired a bright, intelligent expression; but she said she didn't mind being alone because she didn't care as much for the girls as she used to. Maudie said the conversation of the other girls had become so personal lately that it had made her nervous and she didn't enjoy talking any more. Kittie James told Sister Irmingarde she never looked in a mirror any more without seeing herself as others saw her, and Kittie cried and said she would die if she couldn't get thin and beautiful like the ancient Greeks. After that the whole story came out, and Sister Irmingarde discov-

ered that every single girl in our set had got the idea that all the other girls hated to look at her. As this is a most unpleasant feeling it was making some of them sick and all of them nervous.

When Sister Irmingarde ordered our entire class to report to her in the study-hall at eight o'clock that night we suspected what was going to happen—and it happened.

First she gave us a general talk about beauty and told how it was in the eye of the beholder. She discussed what she called its "relative importance" and described the mental qualities that were more desirable than beauty, and told what beauty of character meant. She spoke about personal neatness as a handmaid of beauty, and all the girls turned and gazed admiringly at me; and of the charm of animation, and they looked at Mabel Blossom; and of dignity of carriage and manner, and they gazed at Maudie Joyce. Before she got through she had made every girl there feel better—more comfortable, you know. Then she forbade us to make even the slightest criticism of one another's appearance in future. Every girl drew a long breath of relief, as if a heavy weight had been lifted from her heart. For it is indeed true that the more one loves one's dear friends

the harder it is to have them tell one about one's faults. As a literary artist I really knew this all the time. But I had forgotten about it till the girls began to tell me my faults, and then it was too late.

That night, after the Great Silence fell, Kittie James crept along the halls to my room. Her sister had sent her a box that very day. Kittie had a chocolate cake in one hand and a jelly layer cake in the other, and she had to put them both down on the floor before she could open my door. The pockets of her bath robe were filled with fudge. She sat on the edge of my bed and I sat up among the pillows, and we ate this nourishing food and talked in whispers. Kittie said she would have died in two weeks more if our beauty-work had gone on. She said she was never going to pursue beauty again, but she was going to make her character so lovely that the girls wouldn't mind how fat she was. It was a little hard to follow her noble resolutions because her mouth was full of chocolate cake. But, in spite of the cake, some things came out so clearly that I was afraid they would wake Adeline Thurston, who slept in the next room.

Kittie said that lately she had been thinking very seriously indeed about the ancient Greeks.

She said that even yet she didn't really believe in them; but if there ever *had* been any, and if they really *had* pursued beauty, she was sure she knew exactly what had caused their decline and fall.

"Probably they told each other they were too fat and what was wrong with their features," Kittie said. "Of course that made the strong ones kill the weak ones, right off. Then the strong ones tried beauty-treatments and flesh-reduction and things like that for a while —and just died of despair!"

I looked at Kittie with deep respect. At last I understood why George Morgan loved to talk to her. As I have oft said, she is not a brilliant student. But she has a way of thinking things out all by herself—and ever and anon she surprises one by the utterance of what Sister Irmingarde calls "a deep and vital truth."

VI

MABEL BLOSSOM'S PEARL PIN

THIS chapter has a moral, but that should not prevent the gentle reader from reading it. Besides, the moral comes at the very end, and there will be a great deal of interest and literary entertainment in between. So "we will proceed without further digression," as Sister Irmingarde says in the history class when we girls forget dates and try to divert her mind by analyzing Louis XVI.'s character. It is really interesting to analyze, for he was in many ways a weak and sinful man; but Sister Irmingarde always looks so bored when we try it, and so anxious to know about the Punic wars or something, that it's dreadfully discouraging to earnest students who want to develop their minds as fast as they can by intelligent exchange of thought.

This leads us straight to Mabel Blossom's pearl pin. The reader doesn't know why, but

I do, so it's all right. You see, it was in the history class that Mabel Blossom suddenly took a little box out of her pocket one day and passed it stealthily along the aisles from one girl to another, making signs that we were all to look at what was in it. We did, right off. Most of the girls would look long and earnestly at anything that would divert their minds in class, and this thing Mabel was showing was *jewelry*. So the girls gazed and gazed, and nodded to Mabel to show they liked it, until I thought it would never get to me.

Finally it did, and I found the box was not new, and the thing in it was a gold pin, not new either, lying on a piece of cotton. It was round and had pearls in it, with a red stone in the middle, and there was a pin in the back to fasten it to any part of the happy possessor where it would look best. I got behind my book and tried it under my chin, against my collar, but of course I couldn't see how it looked. Then I tried it on my left shoulder like a badge, and I could just see it there by squinting.

I took my time, for the Sisters have taught us that it's underbred to seem hurried. I thought Kittie James, whose turn to look came next, would die of agitation before I passed it on to her; but I knew waiting would be a lesson in

self-control for Kittie, and she needed one. Kittie gets terribly excited about clothes and jewelry, especially jewelry. We're not allowed to wear much jewelry at the convent, except a watch, if we have one, or a confirmation ring, or some other possession fraught with family associations, as it were. Kittie has a ring and a tiny watch the nuns let her wear, and sometimes she is allowed to put on a thin gold chain with a cross on it, that her sister Josephine gave her; but usually she has to keep it in a bureau drawer. Sometimes, in the evening, when Kittie and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy and Maudie Joyce and I are together, Kittie borrows every piece of jewelry we have, and puts them all on at once, and then stands in front of the looking-glass for half an hour at a time, pretending she's a Hindu princess, decorated with one watch and four chains and five rings. I mention this to reveal one phase of Kittie's character.

Finally I took pity on Kittie and passed the pin on to her very carefully, so Sister Irmingarde wouldn't be disturbed by seeing it; and Kittie fussed over it for ten minutes before she gave it to the girl next to her. That was the only time I ever handled the pin and got a really close look at it. The rest of the time it was on Mabel

—until it vanished from our gaze in the tragic way I will describe when I get round to it.

When everybody had seen the pin that morning, Mabel Blossom got it back again and fastened it on her blouse, and all the girls made signs showing that it was becoming, and that they wished they had one, too; and Kittie James, who was reciting, told Sister Irmingarde that the most significant thing about the Greeks was their love of pearl pins. But nobody minded, because it was Kittie. Then 'most everybody forgot the pin except Mabel. She couldn't, because she had it on.

At noon Mabel explained that her aunt had sent it to her for her sixteenth birthday, and that her aunt had worn it for years, and that Sister Irmingarde had said Mabel could wear it, as she was not wearing any other jewelry. She wore it for a week, and we girls got used to it and to the effect of elegance it gave Mabel. Once she lent it to Adeline Thurston, to cheer her up when she was going to confession and had to tell something she didn't care to dwell on. Another time she let Maudie Joyce wear it to the station when she went there to meet a friend—and Kittie James had it on half a dozen times. But usually it shone like a small, pale, cold moon on Mabel Blossom's chest, and we all got used to seeing it there.

Then one day she lost it.

I put that in a paragraph by itself to show how important it is. It is also the real beginning of this chapter. The rest was the orchestra playing and the lights being turned on and the curtain going up before the drama.

The drama started in to be a tragedy right off. Mabel Blossom was simply crazy over the loss of her pin, and every girl at St. Catharine's sympathized with her so much that no one learned any lessons for days. I can get my lessons by reading them once, but even I had to tell Sister Irmingarde that I couldn't study, for every time I opened my book I saw Mabel's pale, stricken face before me. She looked dreadful, and her eyes were red all the time, partly from looking for the pearl pin and partly from crying about it. The whole convent helped her to look.

At first she thought she had lost it down by the river one day when we went there for ferns. So the entire river-front was 'most wrecked by the girls, who made up searching-parties and spent hours hunting for Mabel's pin. The little Minims looked, too, and tore up grass and flowers by the roots, lest they leave some spot untouched. None of the Minims had seen the pin, and Mabel couldn't talk about it now without bursting into

tears; but the older girls told them how it looked as they remembered it, and for a while it seemed to me that every girl at St. Catharine's spent her time either describing Mabel Blossom's lost pin or listening to some one else describe it. In the mean time the pin stayed lost.

Then Mabel remembered that she had been sitting under the great willow on the campus the day she missed it, and everybody rushed to the willow and looked for it there. By the time they got through, the grass under the tree was trampled into the earth or torn up by the roots, and the benches were scratched, and the moss was even pulled off the bark of the willow. Maudie Joyce did that. She said you could never tell where things would slip to, and it would be too utterly horrible if Mabel never found her pin. Maudie said she remembered exactly how the pin looked. It was about as large as a fifty-cent piece, and had sixteen lovely pearls in it. She said no one could afford to lose a pin like that, and an heirloom besides, and she was going to hunt for it in all her spare time.

Kittie James was sure Mabel had lost the pin in her own room, and would find it under the rug or behind some piece of furniture. So she and Mabel took up the rugs and moved the

furniture out into the hall, and took down the curtains, and even pulled off the wall-paper in places where it bulged a little and looked as if it might have a pearl pin behind it. Kittie wrote Josephine about the pin and described it. She said it was the size of a silver dollar, and had twenty-four pearls in it.

Josephine wrote back that Mabel ought to advertise; so Mabel did. She didn't offer a reward, because she knew she could never make any proper financial return to the noble soul that brought it back. But she said it was a priceless heirloom with a history.

The Sisters hadn't paid much attention to the loss of the pin until the advertisement came out. Then they got interested. Sister Edna asked Mabel Muriel Murphy about it, and Mabel Muriel told Sister Edna all she had heard about the pin. She said Mabel Blossom's aunt was a very wealthy woman, and that the pin had been handed down to her by her great-aunt. Next, Sister Irmingarde asked me about it. She hadn't really looked at the pin when Mabel asked permission to wear it, as she supposed it was some trifle. I told her all I knew, which wasn't much, and finally Reverend Mother sent for Adeline Thurston and asked searching questions about the pin. Adeline told her what the

REVEREND MOTHER ASKED SEARCHING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PIN

pin looked like. She said the twenty-four pearls were about the size of large currants, but the real value of the pin was its history. She told Reverend Mother that Adeline Thurston's friend in Chicago knew Mabel's mother, and that an Indian rajah had given the pin to Mabel's great-great-grandaunt, and that the ruby in it was supposed to be the central jewel of his crown. After that a panic swept through our erstwhile peaceful halls.

The Sisters were more sure than ever that girls should not wear jewels, so they took away everything but watches, and locked their booty in the convent safe. Mabel Blossom gave up even trying to study, and roamed around the convent grounds like a lost soul, looking everywhere for her pearl pin, and moaning soft, low moans. The girls spent all their free time helping her, and the campus looked as if a cyclone had come to search for the pin, too. No one talked about anything but Mabel Blossom's loss. Every girl wrote home about the pin, and described it to her parents, and told about the Indian rajah, and the mothers wrote back advice and suggestions, and told all *they* knew about Indian jewelry. Mabel Blossom couldn't eat by this time, and the infirmarians got up tempting dishes and sent them to her. Then she

couldn't sleep, and they took her into the infirmary and nursed her tenderly. But she wouldn't stay there long—she was too anxious to look for the pearl pin. The old gardeners were going crazy over the way the grounds were being torn up, and Sister Italia pasted a notice in the study-hall, threatening to suspend any girls who tore more paper off their walls or pulled up more boards.

Little by little more facts came out about the pearl pin. The rajah had fallen in love with Mabel Blossom's great-great-great-grandaunt, and had longed to wed her. But her heart was another's, so he sent her as a wedding-gift the wonderful Indian pin which brought health and fortune to the family that possessed it, and ruin if they lost it. Once it had been lost for fifty years, and the Blossoms were terribly poor and in disgrace the whole time. Then they got it back, and all was well again.

You can imagine how thrilling this was to convent girls. Could aught be more romantic? Adeline Thurston wrote a poem about it, and Janet Trelawney set it to music. I began a novel, with Mabel's pearl pin in the very center of the plot, as it was in the center of the rajah's crown. Then, through the advertisement or the talk of the girls, or perhaps both,

the newspapers began to print things about the pin. A reporter came to see Mabel, but she was in the infirmary, so Maudie saw him instead; and the next day the paper came out with big, black head-lines:

THE RAJAH'S JEWEL AT ST. CATHARINE'S

A CONVENT GIRL POSSESSES AND LOSES THE GREATEST RUBY IN THE INDIAN EMPIRE

The article went on to describe Mabel's pin and tell about the rajah, and it criticized the Blossom family severely for putting the priceless gem into a school-girl's hands. It said the jewel had probably been stolen by a pair of famous London thieves who were "operating" in America and had heard about the ruby and the pearls.

That started the other newspapers, and the next day they came out with stories about the rajah's ruby. They said it brought blood and disaster in its wake, and one of them printed a list of the deaths in the Blossom family during the past fifty years, and laid every blessed one of them to the ruby. Another newspaper said the ruby had blazed for a time in the haik of Bou Maza, the leader of an Arab rebellion in Algeria, and that when he wore it he bore a

charmed life and no bullets hit him, but as soon as it was stolen from him he was slain.

By this time the convent grounds were full of reporters and photographers who wouldn't go away, and detectives who wanted to find the jewel and the thieves. Some parents got excited and came to St. Catharine's to find out what it all meant and what the effect would be on their children. For the worst thing of all had happened by this time. The newspapers and the detectives were beginning to hint that perhaps one of the girls had taken the pin. They didn't say it right out, but they came pretty near it, and when that happened you can imagine how we girls felt. Every one knew how much Kittie James loved jewelry, so one or two girls who were jealous of her—but I won't even write that. It is too horrible.

We held an indignation meeting, and most of the girls were crying when it was over. The nuns felt the worst of all—for us and for the school. Nothing like this had ever happened before in the long and honorable history of St. Catharine's. Reverend Mother looked actually haggard when we met her in the halls, and Sister Irmingarde went around with her mouth in a straight line and her eyes as cold as agate. Usually she smiles a great deal—and she has the

most wonderful smile I know, beginning at her lips and spreading first to her eyes and then over the whole room. It makes one feel young and inexperienced, but good and noble and tender and ambitious and, most of all, *understood.* You know she is looking into the very bottom of your soul, and you don't mind having her do it. At least that's the way *I* feel. But no one had a chance to feel that way for a long time after Mabel lost her pin—for the saddest thing in all those sad days was that Sister Mary Irmingarde stopped smiling. But she was simply lovely to Kittie James, and so were most of the girls; and Kittie was the only girl at St. Catharine's who didn't know why.

A few days after the newspapers began to print things about the pin a big Sunday newspaper came out with a picture of it. The picture showed the pin filling the center of the page. It was about the size of a dinner-plate, and had rays of light going from the ruby in the middle and spreading all over the rest of the sheet. There was a picture of Mabel, too—made up and not a bit like her; for of course the newspapers were not allowed to have her photograph. The article around the picture told how many Blossoms were left, and what would probably happen to them now that the pin was gone.

It described Mabel's brother, who is a civil engineer working on the Panama Canal, and it said that her mother and the rest of the family were in Europe. Then it asked in big letters, "Will They Ever Come Back?"

Mabel shrieked when she saw that, and was led to the infirmary in a dreadful attack of hysterics; and Kittie James, who saw her go into it, and who is very sympathetic, had hysterics, too, right off, and was taken to the infirmary at the same time. This started some of the other girls, and you'd better believe that for a few minutes Sister Irmingarde had her hands full.

We were all ready for hysterics now. At first, even sorry as we were for Mabel, a good many of the girls almost enjoyed the excitement. It made things different from our usual quiet life, and girls love a change, even if it's almost an unpleasant one. I felt a little bit that way, though I was sorry for Mabel. Besides, being a Literary Artist, I saw the dramatic possibilities in her loss, and the human, vivid life it brought into our cloister-halls made my girlish pulses throb. But it is a strange truth that one can get tired even of thrills. If one is thrilling all the time, it isn't really thrills, you see; it is monotony. Besides, our nerves were getting jumpy. When the newspapers began to hint that perhaps one

of us had taken it—well, we were anxious enough to forget Mabel's pin and return to the peaceful atmosphere of the intellectual life. No one even mentioned the pin any more. Finally we almost disliked Mabel. She knew it, too, and she told me one day she was like one of the specimen bugs the girls in the nature classes pinned in their rooms. She said she felt exactly as if she had been fastened up before us all with her pearl pin stuck through her. I felt sorry for her, but for a long time, even after that, my first thought was when I saw her:

"Horrors! here's Mabel coming."

Then I would go down inside of my brain and find another thought and drag it up quickly and make it run like this: "Poor girl, she is not to blame for the strange and terrible position in which she has placed us all!"

I got so I could do it, but the other girls couldn't, though I tried to teach them how. Maudie said she simply couldn't bear the sight of Mabel any more, and Mabel Muriel Murphy felt the same way. Naturally poor Mabel suffered more than ever when she found this out, and she would have gone home if she had had any home to go to. But with her brother at Panama and the rest of the family in Europe and the house

closed, there was nothing to do but stay in school and try to be brave. Kittie was the only girl who was the same to Mabel right through; but you see there were things Kittie didn't know, or Mabel, either.

One Saturday afternoon, about a month after the pin was lost, Mabel sent a Minim to me with a note asking me to come to her room. She was going to put new yokes in two silk blouses, and she wanted me to help, because when I don't the yokes bulge out. It is strange indeed how many different things I can do and how few things other girls can do—*well*, I mean. I went to Mabel, though I didn't really want to, and I found her on her knees before a trunk which she had just emptied. The floor was covered with clothes she had taken out of it. While she was talking to me she shook out a blouse she had picked up, and when she was going to put it down again I saw the gleam of something on it. I stopped her, a strange, mysterious instinct stirring in me the while.

"What's that?" I asked. I took the blouse out of her hands and looked at it, and as I looked I could feel my eyes bulge right out of my face, I was making them look so hard. On the left shoulder of Mabel's blouse there was a little round thing. I gazed at it and then gazed at

Mabel, and then we both gazed at the thing again, and gazed and *gazed.*

The thing was a pin about the size of a silver twenty-five-cent piece. It had six tiny seed-pearls in a circle round it—the kind that are *halves*, stuck on. In the center of the circle was a red stone a little larger than any of the pearls. It was a garnet. The pearls looked dark, as if they were soiled or stained in some way; the fastener of the pin was bent where Mabel had pinned it to her blouse.

Once more I looked at Mabel. She was looking at me. And as we looked at each other the same words fell from our pale lips in hollow, incredulous tones:

"Is *that* the rajah's pin?"

It wasn't finding the pin that surprised us. It didn't even surprise us that Mabel had worn the pin on this particular blouse, and put away the blouse until she had time to put a fresh yoke in it, and then forgotten all about it. That was all natural enough—for Mabel Blossom—and both Mabel and I knew it was, and didn't stop to fuss about it. The thing that surprised us was the way that pearl pin looked!

Of course I knew it wasn't the size of a dinner-plate, as the newspapers had made it. But I did expect to see it at least the size of a silver

dollar, with twenty-four great big pearls in it and a blazing ruby that dazzled the eyes. I almost remembered it that way. And there lay that little, cheap, shabby pin, looking ashamed of itself, and actually seeming to bury itself in the blouse, as if it wanted to get away from our staring, horrified eyes. I couldn't think. My brain acted as if it said to itself, "This is too much for me," and then turned its back coldly on me and the pin.

While I kept looking at Mabel, in the stupid, dazed way I felt, she turned her eyes away and sat staring straight in front of her. Finally she said, "I can't *believe* it looks like that," and then she repeated over and over and over again:

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" And at last she burst into tears.

I couldn't tell her what to do. But I knew who could. There was just one person in the whole world who could advise us in such a crisis of life as this. Need I tell the gentle reader who it was? No. I had to tell Mabel Blossom, but that was because her mind was clouded by despair.

"Take it to Sister Irmingarde," I said. We did.

We found her alone in her class-room, marking some papers, and we laid the pin down on her

desk, blouse and all, exactly as we had found it. For a second she sat staring at it and at us. Then she spoke to us in short, staccato tones, strangely different from her usual way of talking.

"What's this?" she said. And before we could answer, "What's *this?*"

Mabel couldn't reply, so I answered for her.

"It's the rajah's pin, Sister," I said, dully, "with the blazing ruby from the center of his crown."

The words sounded silly, but I said them from habit. We hadn't heard much else said, you know, for a month.

Sister Irmingarde gave the pin one more look. Also, she looked at us as we stood, solemn-eyed and awe-struck, before her. Then she folded her arms on her desk and laid her head down on them—and laughed and laughed and laughed. Once before Mabel Blossom and I had seen her do that when we stood before her together. Perhaps you remember when, gentle reader, but I hope you don't. That time we couldn't laugh with her, but this time we could. At least I could; and I did. I began, and finally Mabel joined in, but not very heartily, and pretty soon Mabel could not stop because she was so nervous. That made Sister Irmingarde stop in a hurry.

After supper that evening Sister Irmingarde

called the older girls together and gave us a little talk in the study-hall. First of all she told us the pin was found, and she explained how Mabel had put away her blouse and forgotten it. Then she waited for the applause to die away. It took a long time, for the girls were delighted on their own account and Kittie's, and glad, too, on Mabel's. They all kept nodding and smiling at Mabel while they clapped.

When they finally quieted down, Sister Irmingarde held up the pin. The girls looked, but they couldn't see it, so she marched them up to her desk six at a time. She called out their names, and they went to her and looked and stared and stared, and then looked at one another. Nobody said much. Nobody could. After they had all seen it, Sister Irmingarde put the pin down on the desk and stood up. We knew what that meant. She was going to give us what she calls "a few thoughts to take away." Someway, when she does that, I can feel my brain bulge as I listen.

She said she had received a letter from Mabel's mother that day, written in Paris, in answer to one Sister Irmingarde had written her. Mrs. Blossom said no rajah had ever seen the pin. She said it was bought at the World's Fair in Chicago, and had cost about four dollars. Sister

Irmingarde let that sink in. Then, very gently, but in words that lingered in our girlish minds a long, long time, she told us the moral of our strange experience.

But, after all, need I repeat the moral to the gentle but intelligent reader, and thus, as it were, paint the lily?

I wot not.

VII

THE CALL OF SPRING

TENNYSON says that in the spring one's fancy "lightly turns to thoughts of love." Usually I agree with the poets. This time I don't—and I ought to know. Besides, all the other girls at St. Catharine's agree with me—Maudie Joyce, and Mabel Blossom, and Mabel Muriel Murphy, and Kittie James, and the rest. We've watched three springs now to see if our fancies turned to thoughts of love and they never have. What they turn to are thoughts of the woods and fields, and spring flowers, and new clothes, and Easter examinations—but especially to the woods and fields.

In the winter our convent grounds are big enough for any one. They are very large, with a river flowing through them, and they stretch away off to the place where the sky comes down to meet them. They have the most beautiful nooks everywhere, too—places where you can

go alone and weep and think about life. But in the spring, someway, the grounds begin to contract, like the magic skin on the man in Mr. Balzac's story. All the lovely things seem to lie outside. The wild pigeons fly over us without stopping. The pickerel in the river swim past as fast as they can, as if they had important engagements somewhere else. The songs of the bluebirds come from far away. Then we girls begin to remember rules and boundaries and to feel shut in and restless.

Of course we're not allowed to go outside of the grounds except in nature classes with our teachers or by special permission, which the nuns only give with slow and grudging words. When they have reluctantly uttered these, we can go into town on the trolley to buy gloves or dental floss or rubbers, with our eyes straight ahead and some girl in the graduating class tagging along and looking tired and all the pleasure of the occasion spoiled.

This spring we felt even more cramped than usual. Just as soon as the snow went and the ice in the river melted and the pussy-willows began to come out, I got dreadfully tired of books and Welsh rarebits and fudge and writing stories and other intellectual pursuits. I used to go clear around the main building, outside,

so I wouldn't have to walk down the central hall and hear nine girls practising Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" all at once on nine different pianos in nine little music-rooms. I knew places in the woods where the arbutus and hepatica were just beginning to wonder whether they could come up; I knew where the wind flowers could be found and where the first blackbirds would build their nests. I knew exactly how the young birch saplings looked, with the snow melting on their white arms; and I kept thinking of these things and wishing I could go and see them instead of shutting my eyes and imagining them and smelling the steam heat and Sister Italia's wax polish at the same time.

One morning, late in March, while I was sitting in the study-hall right after breakfast trying to study, but really thinking all these different thoughts and some more besides, Maudie Joyce opened the door. She looked excited; her eyes were shining and her cheeks were pink. We're not allowed to speak in the study-hall, so she beckoned to me to come out of the room; and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy got right up and came, too, just as if Maudie had beckoned to them. Maudie seemed glad to see them. She always likes to talk to as many girls as she can at the same time. She seems to

think one girl can't understand all she says, even when I am that girl. I have tried to remove this error from her mind, but in vain. The minute we appeared she began to talk, but very softly, so the pupils in the study-hall wouldn't be disturbed.

"Oh, girls!" she said, "I've just been down to St. Agatha's shrine. Guess what I saw there!"

We guessed. I asked if it was a great author or lecturer visiting the shrine. Mabel Muriel Murphy, who is very pious, thought it was a new morning star or a halo or some other kind of a miracle. Mabel Blossom hoped it was a golf-club she had lost the day before. But Maudie didn't listen much to what any of us thought. She never does.

"It was a *wren!*" she said. "The darlingest little wren you ever saw!"

We all talked at once, right off. This was only the last week in March, and wrens don't come to our part of the country till May. We knew poor Maudie was mistaken and we told her so. Mabel Blossom said perhaps she had seen a hawk. Maudie talked at the same time in hurt, indignant tones and louder than we did, so at last we stopped.

"I guess I know a wren from a sparrow or a robin," she said. "Or a *hawk!* Of course he's

early. That's the lovely part of it. That's why I'm telling you about him. He was on the back of the seat near the shrine, very close to me, and I looked at him a long time. He seemed dreadfully cold and kind of pale, but so brave; and he cocked his little head at me in the cutest way. While I was watching him he flew off to the hazel hedge just beyond the boundary wall, so I couldn't follow."

"Let's go and see," suggested Mabel Blossom, with simple brevity. "If he *is* pale I've got to. I never saw a pale wren."

We were all thinking that very thing, but Mabel got it out first. Mabel Muriel Murphy looked at her watch. She's the only one of us who has a watch, but she doesn't pull it out now as much as she used to when first she came to St. Catharine's. She said it was fifteen minutes of nine and that she didn't think we had time to go anywhere; but even while she was speaking the rest of us rushed for our hats and coats and started without waiting for any more words, so Mabel Muriel rushed too. She's afraid to be *in* things and she hates to be left out. It's a wearing nature to have. Mabel Muriel has terrible struggles with conscience and remorse, but she never really misses anything.

As we went down the steps we met Kittie

James, just back from her special breakfast in the infirmary. Kittie's stomach has been more delicate than ever since I reduced her, so she has to have fruit and cereal and steak and chops and eggs for breakfast. As soon as she knew where we were going she said she would come, too. The five of us went toward St. Agatha's shrine, walking as fast as we could, but in a very dignified way, with our shoulders back and our chins up, because we were likely at any minute to meet some of the Sisters on the campus. They walk so well themselves, and they are so particular about the way we walk, that it makes our meetings quite painful sometimes when they ought to be just pleasant occasions.

It was the most satisfying kind of a day—not bright, but interesting. The sky was grayish blue, like a clean, new slate, with darker gray clouds drifting over it and a little patch of yellow showing every few minutes when the sun peeped out. There were bits of snow on the ground here and there; but it was melting fast, and the earth was like miles of blotting-paper soaked in brownish water; the grass was beginning to look green, and the buds on the trees were bursting with fatness. Before I had drawn three deep breaths I felt young again; sometimes I feel as if sixteen is a very old age. We were away

from the campus now, so we had dropped our chins and settled down to quick walking and we saved our breath for that and didn't talk. There was no sound except our footsteps as we squashed into the water or broke a twig or slipped on a little snow patch; but I could 'most hear the voices of the flowers underneath calling up: "Wait for us, girls. We're coming! We're coming! Wait for us; we're coming through!"

I was so afraid I'd step on some brave green head that every now and then I jumped, thinking I saw one. The other girls laughed at me, but I noticed that they were careful, too. Think of stepping on a baby hepatica when it had just painfully poked one eye through the hard earth! It would make me *sick* if I did such a thing.

When we got to the shrine we saw that spring was there before us. The gardeners had been working, and the steps leading up to it and the rustic seats around it were cleaned and freshened. The shrine is at one end of the grounds; it and the old stone wall behind it mark what the girls call "the southern bound."

We climbed over the wall. It was covered with hard and prickly blackberry vines and woodbine and ivy, and the first thing we met was a little squirrel who was climbing at the same time. I suppose we scared him 'most to death, though

of course we didn't mean to. Then we went on toward a line of hazel-bushes huddled together in a hollow in a distant meadow. That's where Maudie said her wren had flown, and, sure enough, when we got nearer we saw a bunched-up feathery ball on one of the bushes and Maudie was vindicated. There he was, looking cold and thin, but the sweetest thing you ever saw—and so lonesome, the poor dear. That's what Maudie meant, I guess, by saying he was pale. We gasped and gazed at him with delight and told him how plucky he was to come so early. He seemed to think he ought to do something to entertain us, so he began a sulky little song—not his free, glad spring song, but a kind of twittering pipe to show he knew that he had visitors and that he was a little gentleman, and he polkaed about on the branch the way they do, with his little tail going like mad.

You can imagine how that charmed us. We forgot about school and nine o'clock and everything else except our wren. Kittie James always has cookies in her pocket. She pulled one out now, a big one, with currants in it, and broke it into pieces and scattered them near the hazel copse. Then we waited to see if he would come for breakfast, but he only cocked one eye at us and went on twittering. Maudie Joyce,

who has studied about birds, said he was calling for a mate, but of course there wasn't any around to answer him. He was just a homesick little troubadour all alone in a new world. We felt dreadfully sorry for him, so we decided to help him as much as we could.

"When he finds a mate he'll want a home," Kittie James said. "Let's have the material all ready. Then, when he has won his bride, he can come and get it."

I took a red ribbon off my hair and dropped it on one of the bushes, where he would be sure to find it when he was ready to build a nest. Maudie Joyce tore a piece off her clean handkerchief and put it there, too. Kittie James, who has a warm and sympathetic heart for animals, said she was 'most sure he'd rather have some long human hairs to build with than anything else. She told Mabel Blossom she could pull them out of Mabel's head without Mabel's feeling it. Mabel didn't think she could, but she took off her hat and let Kittie try. Kittie selected a little lock of hair and held it in her right hand down close to the roots and we all stood around and watched with eager eyes. Then just before she pulled the lock out Kittie gave Mabel a dreadful slap on her face with her left hand. When Mabel was able to

speak Kittie showed her the hairs and asked if she had felt them come; Mabel hadn't, so you see the experiment was a success. Kittie is developing all the time. Sometimes I can hardly realize that she is the immature child of twelve who came to St. Catharine's almost four years ago.

We were all so interested about the hair that we forgot to be quiet, and Mabel had shrieked over Kittie's slap; but the wren didn't seem to mind us. Perhaps he thought nothing could be worse than it was already in a world that didn't seem to have any other wrens in it. We put Mabel's hair with the other things for building a nest, and we pointed out to Mabel how nice it would be to think of him in May telling his mate all about her and explaining how lovely her hair was. Mabel didn't get enthusiastic, though. She kept averting her eyes from Kittie in a cold, reserved manner. At last she said she wanted to take out some of Kittie's hair without Kittie feeling it. But Kittie said, "No." It had been done once. Why paint the lily? In these pleasant and instructive interests we forgot all about how *tempus fugit* until suddenly, across the silent fields, came the sound of a distant bell.

At the first note my heart seemed to stop

beating. Then, for I am truly a student of life and I love to watch the human soul in critical moments, I looked at the other girls. Maudie Joyce turned white as chalk and hid her face in her hands; Mabel Blossom looked like a big balloon that has suddenly had a pin stuck in it and shriveled up; Kittie James was scared to death, and her new manner of self-possession had dropped off her like a Minim's coat at a party. Mabel Muriel Murphy had fallen on her knees and was praying. Too well did she know what Sister Edna would think of *her!* It was my voice that broke the awful silence.

"It's eleven o'clock," I said, with terrifying distinctness. "We've been here, *out of bounds*, two hours! What shall we do?"

For a long and awful minute no one answered. But Mabel Blossom was beginning to look natural again and finally she spoke. She said there was no sense in going back then, but if we waited till twelve o'clock and then got back and went in to dinner with the rest of the girls perhaps the nuns wouldn't notice us, because every Sister might think we had spent the morning in the other Sisters' classes.

It was a meager hope, but it was the only one we had and we had to use it. Besides, it gave us another hour out in the fields. Every one

cheered up right off and Mabel Muriel stopped praying. We couldn't stay where we were for fear some of the nuns would come to the shrine and see us in the distance, so of course the only thing to do was to go on. We went, but before we started I cut a forked switch off the hazel bushes to use as a divining-rod and locate hidden springs. Mabel Blossom said she didn't want to locate any more; she was standing in one now. But the others thought it would be interesting, so I went first, holding the forked switch lightly so it could point downward as soon as we came to a hidden spring or gold or jewels; and the other girls followed.

We had all been cheerful enough when we started out, but now, strange as it may seem, we felt even more cheerful. My father is a general, and once I heard him tell my mother and brother Jack exactly how he felt the first time he "went into action" during a battle. He was only a young lieutenant then and he said he felt kind of limp at first and as if he hadn't any legs or arms, and he kept wanting to duck his head and get behind things. But pretty soon the bullets began to whistle by, and the cannon began to roar, and something woke up in him and roared too—something wild and savage that made him feel as strong as ten men.

I didn't feel exactly wild and savage now, but I felt like a violin all tuned up—every string stretched tight, you know—and I wanted to sing and shout. Maudie Joyce felt the same. She told me so afterward. So did the other girls, all but Mabel Blossom, who was strangely silent and out of tune with dear Nature. But it wasn't remorse with Mabel, or conscience, either. How terrible a thing it is in life that ofttimes when you know, alas! that you are doing wrong, you feel so happy over it. Some day I will find out why and write a story about it. I would ask Sister Irmingarde now, but what does she know of Temptation—the poor darling!

The sun came out and winked at us again and then decided to stay where he could watch us. So he hung over us, nearly in the middle of the heavens, and they kept getting more blue, and the snow patches melted faster than ever and baby ponds lay where they had been, and there were lovely soft colors all around us. The maple branches were just taking on the pinkish shade that comes first on the twigs and the buds, and we could see places where the red squirrels had been tapping the branches for the young sap. The bluebirds were singing their lovely song and sometimes we heard the notes of the

I SAT DOWN ON THE EDGE OF THE BROOK

blackbird. Once we caught a glimpse of a woodchuck just poking his little head out of his hole for a sleepy look at the world. He vanished when he saw us, as if he felt ashamed of being out so soon, but he needn't have been; we were out, too. On all sides we found pussy-willows and gathered them; they were pink now, but we knew they'd be a fuzzy gray a little later; and we pulled branches of the alders and birches and willows and opened the buds to see the insides, and we ate yards and yards of the bark of the black-birch twigs. You know how good they taste in the spring—so spicy and aromatic.

At last we came to a darling brook hiding among a lot of willows. I knew it well, for I had spent whole mornings by it with our nature class; but I had never before come to it in March when the snow and ice were just off it and all the little things in it were beginning to feel alive again. I simply couldn't get past that brook. I wanted to see the gnats and water-bugs and spiders and frogs and beetles and tadpoles and what they were doing. So I pushed through the willows and sat down on the edge of the brook and began to look; and Kittie James sat down, too, and crooned over a young tadpole she discovered the very first thing. The other girls waited for us a while, first on one foot and then

on the other; they thought it was too wet to sit down. But when they saw that Kittie and I were getting more excited every minute they sat down, too, as they should have done in the first place. Maudie and Mabel Blossom were more interested in the birds than in the brook. Mabel pointed out a hawk that was hovering over us, ready to snatch tadpoles, and the way Kittie clasped two tadpoles to her breast and saved them was beautiful to see. They were dead when she got through, but I'm sure they would rather have died that way from kindness than be eaten by a horrid hungry hawk, and I told Kittie so when Mabel Blossom laughed. Mabel was a great deal more gay after that happened. It took her mind off her hair.

If the gentle reader has never sat beside a meadow brook in March and studied its wonders, I advise her to go right out next March and do it. We saw the most interesting things! A love for water-bugs grew up in me that day that has never perished since. For a long time I kept them in bottles in my room and studied them with scientific interest. While we were watching beetles and water-bugs being born and living and caring for their young and dying, I felt as if we were in some new little world where years and years passed in one of our minutes. Per-

haps we were. All the time the frogs were talking in harsh, deep frog talk, and the tree toads were singing a shrill chorus, and the little brook was chuckling like a baby with a bottle, and a fat robin in a maple near us was singing hard enough to burst his throat. The girls were too interested to talk much, and I was glad. It was dreadful to have Nature's beautiful music interrupted by girlish voices when the girlish voices were not really saying anything.

Suddenly Mabel Muriel Murphy did say something, and it made us jump. We had heard the lid of her watch click, but I had just found a new kind of insect deep in the mud, and Mabel Blossom was wringing out her stockings (she had put her feet into the brook in her zeal; but it didn't matter much, they were so wet, anyway) and Kittie James had found a whole family of frogs, and Maudie was watching a thin, hungry-looking little rabbit that was scurrying past us, so no one paid any attention to Mabel Muriel at first. But when she said in icy tones, "It's half past two," I tell you we sat up. Then with one accord we all turned terrible, accusing eyes on Mabel Blossom. She had got us into this. How was she going to get us out of it? But all Mabel Blossom could think about was her feet and her wet shoes and stockings. As

usual, I was expected to do the thinking. I tried to, but I couldn't. I wrapped my very nicest beetles in my handkerchief and got up and told my dear companions there was a farm just over the hill where we could go and get some bread and milk. Then, I said, we could talk over the terrible position in which we were placed and decide what to do next.

Young as I am, I have often observed that in what real writers call "great extremities" my dear companions turn to me. They turned now, and it was beautiful to see Kittie James's sweet face light up at the thought of food. She left her tadpoles without a pang and followed whither I led. Mabel Blossom had put on her shoes and stockings again and they were so wet that when she walked you could hear the water squash out of them. So Mabel was strangely silent. We all were. All our feet were wet. So were our skirts. We were beyond the sound of convent bells by this time, but our consciences gnawed like the wolf in the Spartan boy's bosom, or, if it was not conscience, it was hunger.

Mrs. Dunn, the farmer's wife, looked very much surprised to see us, for none of St. Catharine's girls had ever called on her before in March. She asked lots of questions, which we answered in a manner "courteous but reserved," such as Sister

Irmingarde says one is justified in showing when answering prying questions. Mrs. Dunn had a little bit of a farm and she said she couldn't give us anything but bread and milk, but she gave every girl a bowl of that and wouldn't take any money for it, though we had plenty. Mabel Muriel had a five-dollar bill in her pocket-book and she wanted Mrs. Dunn to "accept it," she said. Mrs. Dunn wouldn't, though her eyes looked longing. I suppose she thought perhaps it was Mabel Muriel's sole support and Mabel Muriel didn't explain that her father was a millionaire the way she used to do. Sister Edna has taught her better.

Mrs. Dunn had a nice baby two years old and, of course, we stayed and played with him awhile. Our consciences weren't gnawing as hard now. We felt quite cheerful again; and there's something about a baby, a little pink one, that holds the fascinated gaze. Before we went away Mabel Muriel pinned the five-dollar bill to the baby's dress with her prettiest gold collar-pin, for of course his mother couldn't refuse a present to him. Then we left without saying anything about it, leaving her to make the joyful discovery. Mabel Muriel does beautiful things like that, but I know lots of heavenly ways of spending money that she has never

even thought of. They are useless to me, alas! I have so little money to spend.

When we got outside we had our Thrilling Adventure. Yes, there is one in this story and I hope the gentle reader will notice the art I show in telling it. First a setting of beautiful Nature, then sudden, swift Drama. I'm not afraid to write anything now.

Mrs. Dunn's cottage was four miles from the convent. We didn't leave it until almost five, so before we had gone a mile the shadows began to fall. They were lovely on the sides of the hills, and we all talked about them and about the shadows that fall into every life and what our shadows would be. After that Maudie Joyce talked about the soul awhile and I got out my divining-rod and began to look in earnest for bubbling, hidden springs, for we hadn't found any yet. Kittie James thought maybe the divining-rod had brought the water I was standing in, but Mabel Muriel said no. She wasn't anywhere near the divining-rod, yet the water was over her shoe-tops, too.

Finally we came to some woods—the woods that had my favorite birches in it. We had walked around them when we came, to save time, but I thought it would be dreadful to go back without seeing those birches, so we started

through. It was pretty gloomy, but nobody minded that. When we were almost halfway through the woods, I stopped to point out the place where a hermit thrush lived in the summer and where Maudie Joyce and I and two of the graduating class had come several afternoons last year to hear him. Of course we knew he wasn't there now, but while we were looking the bushes began to move. Then a man stepped out into the open space in front of us.

He was young and he had no hat. His clothes were torn and his face was scratched and he looked sick and dreadful. For an instant he stood staring at us, turning his eyes from one to the other, and we all stared back. At last he spoke to me, and after that he hardly looked at the rest, but only at me.

"Say, miss," he said, "I'm starving. Have you got anything a poor dev—a poor man can eat?"

We all looked at Kittie James. I don't think any of us felt exactly frightened. I know I didn't. We just wanted to give him something quick and Kittie usually has things. This time she had fed them to the wren, but we suspected she had tucked something away at Mrs. Dunn's. Sure enough she had. We know our dear companion pretty well. Kittie put

her hand into her pocket and pulled out two little slices of bread stuck together with butter between them. The man looked at them.

"God!" he said.

Then quicker than I can tell about it he had snatched that bread from her hand and it had gone down his throat. I never saw anything like it. He gulped it in one mouthful, as a dog would do it, or a wolf, and glared at me with a kind of wild look, angry and desperate.

"God!" he said again. "Is that all? Ain't you got anything more? I ain't had a mouthful for three days. I tell you I'm *starving!*"

We looked through our pockets and shook our heads, and he turned and threw himself on the ground, with his arms out and his face on them, and groaned.

"I'll have to give up," he said. "I'll have to let 'em take me."

He kept saying that over and over in broken, gulping words as if he were crying; but of course we knew he wasn't crying, for he was a man. At last I spoke up. I felt responsible, for whenever he had spoken it was to me, as if he knew me; so I told him there was a farm very near where he could go and get something to eat. The man looked up for a minute and shook his head.

"Not much," he said. "I'm too near that

farm now. I'm only waitin' for darkness to make a getaway out of this infernal open country."

We didn't know exactly what he meant, but it was plain enough that he wouldn't go to the farm and ask for food. Perhaps he was too proud. He didn't look proud, but you can never tell. I don't suppose Robert Bruce looked proud, or Prince Charlie, or King Alfred, the times they took refuge in shepherds' huts, and places like that. I had my divining-rod in my hand and in my excitement I was pointing it straight at him. He wasn't a hidden spring, but he might have been 'most anything else. I wondered what he was. While he was thinking about it he noticed the rod.

"What are you pointing that stick at me for?" he said. "You ain't afraid of me, are you? I won't do you no harm." And he added, with a queer kind of a laugh, "I've done all the harm I'm goin' to do."

I told him we were not afraid of him and I added that I was going to the farm to get him something to eat.

"We'll all go," Maudie said right off.

"For God's sake get *enough*," was all the man said.

When we reached Mrs. Dunn's house she was

crying with joy over the money she had found pinned to the baby. She wiped her eyes when she saw us and asked if we had come back for it. She said she had kind of thought maybe we would. Mabel Muriel hurried to explain that we had not done such a dreadful thing, but that we wanted something more to eat. When she heard that Mrs. Dunn bustled about in a lovely, busy way.

"Of course, of course," she said. "You didn't have enough. 'Twas reproachin' myself I was after you'd gone."

She brought out a big loaf of bread and began to cut slices off it because she thought we would eat them right there. But I said, firmly, that we would take the whole loaf away with us, and an old knife to cut it, and a big piece of butter, and a pitcher of milk, and some meat if she had any. Mrs. Dunn looked very much surprised indeed and threw up her hands and rolled her eyes; but at last she brought it all out for us—the knife, too, and a slice of ham. She wrapped everything up in a newspaper but the pitcher of milk. I carried that.

When we got into the woods again we found the man lying on the ground just where we had left him. I don't think he expected us to come back. His face, when he saw us, looked like a

light lit suddenly in a dark room. He got up very slowly, as if it was hard for him to move, and we handed him the things.

"It's bread and butter and milk and ham," I said to him. "Ham isn't very digestible, but I guess it's nourishing. I wish we had more."

He laughed a little with his mouth full. He had begun to tear at the meat and bread.

"It's the saving of me," he said. And then without any warning he dropped on his knees before me and kissed my dress.

"I'll be grateful to you as long as I live," he said. "Now run home where you belong."

We didn't think that was very polite, so we bade him a distant good-night and started. Before we had gone more than a few steps he stopped us.

"Will you promise me not to tell any one to-night that you saw me?" he asked: and his eyes looked wild again. Of course we promised. Then he got up and began to eat again as if we weren't there and, with lingering looks behind, we left him.

When we got near the convent lights were flashing in all the buildings and we could see signs of excitement everywhere. Before we had climbed over the stone wall near St. Agatha's

shrine one of the gardeners came running toward us, yelling backward as he came.

"Here they are!" he said. "Here they are! Praise be!" Then shadowy figures came from all directions, for it was dark by that time, and Sisters and girls crowded around us, and we were escorted to the main building by a kind of torch-light procession. Sister Irmingarde and Mother Ernesta met us in the hall. They looked worried to death, but strange to say their faces did not light up with love and joy when they saw us. Only the anxiety fell off them and something else, terribly stern and grave, took its place. I knew then that we had done wrong, and, though usually my intuition is deeper than the intuition of the other girls, this time I think they knew it, too.

We had baths, and food, and rubbings, and hot lemonade first. Then we had words of scathing reproach. But before this, little by little, we learned of the terrible anxiety our absence had caused and of how the whole convent force had been searching for us all day long. They hadn't found us because we were hidden by the willows around the brook part of the time, and at Mrs. Dunn's in the afternoon, and nobody dreamed we would go to either place. They were looking for us in town and in houses

nearer the convent. They would have been worried any day to have us gone, but to-day it was worse than any other time, and this was why. The gentle reader should take a long breath here. We did.

That morning before we were missed the chief of police in the town nearest to our convent had telephoned to the Sisters. He warned them that a desperate character had escaped from jail three days before and had been seen since, by a farmer, hiding near St. Catharine's.

"Keep your girls very close," the chief had said. "Don't let them out of sight of the buildings. He's as bad as they make them."

When Mabel Blossom and I heard this we just gazed into each other's eyes with long, meaning looks. But before we had time to mention that we thought it was like Prince Charlie or King Alfred and the goat-herd, Maudie Joyce came running toward us with a big encyclopedia in her hand.

"May Iverson," she said, in trembling tones, "do you remember how, while that man was talking, your divining-rod kept pointing at him until he spoke of it?"

I remembered.

"Then look at this," said Maudie Joyce, the way Salome must have asked the king to look

at John the Baptist's head. There was a dreadful horror in her tone. She was holding out the encyclopedia with one page open at the word "witch-hazel." This sentence met our unbelieving eyes:

"In the seventeenth century it was believed that the witch-hazel divining-rod, guided by pixies, *was instrumental in the pursuit and capture of criminals.*"

I fell into a chair. So did Mabel Blossom. Maudie stood over us nodding her head.

"We were only instruments," she said, solemnly, "in the hands of Fate. The divining-rod drew us."

It would have been nice if we could have told Sister Irmingarde this, for it would have shown her that we were not to blame. But we couldn't say a word about it that night, of course, because we had promised the criminal we wouldn't. So after supper Sister Irmingarde talked and talked to us. When she had said all the things we knew she'd say, and a great many others we hadn't thought of, she paused and clasped her brow wearily with her white hands and let herself droop forward in her chair and sat staring down at her desk as if she didn't see it. I never saw her look so discouraged.

"But what's the use of talking to you?" she

said, in a despairing tone. "I used to hope you were merely thoughtless. Now—sometimes I'm afraid it's actual indifference in every one of you, closing your ears to the voice of authority."

But it wasn't that. It was several other things. First it was the wren. Then it was the divining-rod guided by the pixies. Last, but most of all, I guess it was the youth in every one of us, opening our ears to the voice of spring.

VIII

I INTRODUCE MOTION STUDY

IT is indeed hard to begin this chapter—there are so many important things that ought to be said in the first paragraph. Perhaps the most important of all is this, so I will say it at once and let the rest wait.

No one can appreciate this experience unless she has tried to do good and failed. If she has, and if she remembers exactly how she felt when failure fell, and if she has read the lives of Cleopatra and Bryan and Napoleon, she may read on.

It began thus: I was sitting at my desk in the study-hall one evening last week, wondering whether I should read Newcomb's *Principles of Political Economy* or Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled.* I had learned my lessons, and I had half an hour left, which was enough to learn all about *either* political economy or theosophy. But I was 'most sure it wasn't enough time to

learn all about them *both;* so I sat for a minute fingering the two books and wondering which I would tear the literary heart out of, as another author beautifully expresses it.

Sister Irmingarde was at her desk at the head of the study-hall, sitting with her eyes on a book that lay open before her. When she is reading one cannot see her eyes at all—only eyelids that seem closed, and long, black eyelashes resting on her cheeks. This night, as I looked at her, her face seemed to me like a beautiful home that some one had locked up and left, with the shutters closed and all the blinds drawn down. While I was thinking this, and wondering whether the other girls were clever enough to think of it, and reaching for my note-book so I could preserve it, the study-hall, which had been cool and gray and ordinary, suddenly became bright and warm and cheerful. A kind of ripple passed over the girls, like a breeze touching a field of grain, and they all seemed to sway forward a little, as if they were pulled by invisible strings. Full well did I know what these things meant. Sister Irmingarde had raised her eyes from her book and was smiling.

I love to see her do that. It is almost the only thing that diverts my mind when I am thinking of my art. I happened to catch her eye, so

I smiled back, of course, with all my heart, and she made a little gesture which meant that I was to come to her desk. I was there almost before she had finished the gesture, and she closed the book she had been reading and offered it to me.

"Here is a book that should interest you, May," she said. "Look it over when you have time and tell me what you think of it." Then, as she was handing it to me, she opened it again and showed me a paragraph she had marked in the second chapter, and told me to read that first because it would give me the thing in a nutshell. I thanked her and took the book back to my desk. There were twenty-five minutes left of the study-hour, so I slid Newcomb and Blavatsky out of the way and began the new book without losing a second. It is always thrilling to read anything Sister Irmingarde recommends, even when the book is instructive; and I'd rather talk about books with her than go to three matinées.

I started at the place she had marked, and I will admit to the gentle reader that as I read the icy chill of disappointment touched my soul. What I wanted to read about was Life, and this book was about motions—not *e*motions, you know; just plain *motions*.

The writer said motions were important indeed, and that everybody wasted a great many

of them, and that the world would be a changed and wonderful place if people would be more careful about them. In the paragraph Sister Irmingarde had marked he told about a girl who made boxes in a factory. She was very quick, and she made more boxes in five minutes than any other girl in any factory anywhere. She was so wonderful that people came to the box factory to see her work; and she won prizes and held the box-making record of the world, and all her dear companions were jealous of her. The man who wrote the book said he heard about how fast she worked, so he got permission to visit the factory and watch her—for he was almost sure that she wasted motions.

The gentle reader will admit that this was not exciting. But it became more interesting when the man got to the factory and sat down to watch the girl make boxes. He did not fall in love with her. I hasten to explain this at once, lest the gentle reader expect him to, and be disappointed, as I was. No. He just watched her make boxes; and he discovered that his terrible, innermost suspicions were correct. She wasted motions. Even this wonderful girl wasted them. I don't remember exactly what the figures were, but I think she wasted twenty-eight motions every time she made a box. She made thirty-

five boxes every five minutes, so you can see for yourself that the poor girl wasted nine hundred and eighty motions every five minutes, instead of saving them all and using them to make seventy-two boxes in five minutes, as she could have done if she had been really clever and careful about her motions.

When the man told this to the girl she was annoyed and spoke rudely to him; for she had been greatly praised in the past, as I said before. But he pointed out how much she could earn by making seventy-two boxes instead of thirty-five, and he showed her how to do it and to save her motions instead of throwing them carelessly around the factory, as it were. (I put in that "as it were" without thinking, and now I know that when I did it I wasted eighteen motions, for the words were not necessary. Motion study makes life seem terribly serious.)

We will now return to the girl making the boxes. In half an hour after the man met her she was making seventy-two boxes every five minutes, with tears of joy on her pale cheeks.

After telling about this unusual and interesting girl, the author went on to show how we all waste time and money by wasting our motions, and his book told how "fatigue-eliminating devices" would help every one to work "with the

reliability of a steam-valve, the joy of a hunting-dog, and the inspiration of an artist." All we have to do in manual work, he said, is to shorten the distance the right hand has to move, and have the left hand in position to begin the next motion right off, and remember our "variables," and consider separately every element that affects the amount of work we are able to turn out. He said in writing, for instance, we ought to save at least one motion on every letter of the alphabet, and shorten the distance the hand has to travel, besides.

That's all I read then. My brain felt tired and not very clear when I got through. I put my hand up to my brow to see if it was really as hot as it felt, and I remembered that I was wasting a motion, so I took it down in a hurry and wasted another. But of course I couldn't leave it there. Then I looked around at my dear companions, to divert my mind.

Kittie James sat just across from me, sharpening a pencil and wasting so many motions that it made me feel sick to watch her. 'Most every time she shaved off a piece of wood she laid down the knife and looked at the pencil and picked up the shaving and threw it in the waste-paper basket, instead of waiting to throw them all in at once. It was a dreadful sight, after what

I had been reading. I turned a hopeful gaze on Mabel Blossom. She was tearing a paper into little bits and dropping half of them on her desk and getting them mixed up with her notes, and, naturally, having to pick them all up again. Maudie Joyce was copying something from a book she was reading, and wasting at least one hundred motions over every paragraph. I looked around the room. Every blessed girl there was wasting motions just as fast as she could waste them, and as I gazed I saw my duty. I realized that what this noble man was doing out in the world I could do in our quiet convent halls. I could "stop the waste" and develop "increased efficiency," as he called it. I thought it over quickly, and my brain throbbed like an engine. I decided that first of all I would teach myself, and next I would teach the girls.

I wanted to begin that very minute, so I sat for a long time studying the things on my desk and planning how I could get them all into the big drawer below it with one motion. It was hard, for there were lots of things there. At last I tried to do it with a noble sweep of the arm, but I didn't get it just right; so the things all fell off the desk, and the ink spilled, and the pens and pencils rolled over the floor and got under the girls' feet, and I had to get down on

my hands and knees and grovel around for them for five minutes. Sister Irmingarde looked dreadfully surprised and all the girls giggled. But I didn't mind very much. I had begun my new work; and, anyway, I saved one motion by not returning Mabel Blossom's nod when we separated in the hall. Mabel had giggled harder than any one else over the things I spilled.

The next morning I started St. Catharine's Motion Study Club, and made myself the president. All the girls joined right off. Most of them seemed to think it was going to be like moving pictures, but they realized their sad error before I got through with them. We went to work in a scientific way, as the man advised in the book. The first thing to do was to study the girls carefully and make notes of their motions, and show them how they could improve. I interested Kittie James immediately by telling her how many motions she wasted at the table. Kittie loves to eat, so I explained to her how much more she could eat if she saved her motions. We have only half an hour for meals, and Kittie saw the point at once; but she was not clever enough to apply it the way she should have done. Her idea was to save her own motions by making the other girls wait on her. I pointed out this error, and Janet Trelawney helped me by making

some sketches showing Kittie saving motions at the table. Kittie looked at the pictures and resigned from the club, but I got her back again the next night by giving a spread for her in my room.

Janet's pictures gave me a very good idea. She had a camera, and I persuaded her to take snap-shots of all the girls when they didn't know it but were wasting motions. These gave us what real writers call "powerful weapons." After we made a careful study of every girl, and wrote out a list of things she had to do regularly, we "enumerated all the motions required in that effort," as the author of the book advised, and we showed the girls that they were throwing away thousands of motions every day.

It was simply fascinating after that to see how things worked out. Of course 'most every girl started wrong. Janet Trelawney, who plays the piano beautifully, decided that she could eliminate a lot of motions by not practising any more, and Sister Cecilia had a dreadful time with Janet until I heard about it and pointed out her mistakes to the poor misguided child. I showed Janet how she could save motions by not glancing at the clock during practice hour and by not getting up and looking into the garden,

until she got through. Sister Cecilia was really enthusiastic when I showed her and Janet how many motions Janet could save by memorizing all her music and not having to turn the sheets. There were over three hundred motions saved every hour, but Janet was cold and unresponsive when I discovered this.

I turned my attention to Adeline Thurston next, and my heart leaped with joy over the dear girl's delight when I showed her how many motions she could save in writing. Adeline writes poetry, and I proved that by making her letters smaller she could write ever so many more poems without tiring her hand. Adeline was so grateful she almost cried, for she is a frail child and has to save her strength. She tried my plan right off and it worked beautifully, except that the next time she composed a poem she made the letters so small she couldn't read them afterward, so her beautiful poem was lost to the world. Adeline resigned from the club that very day, and I had to give her my new belt-buckle to get her back. We had to have her, for she is always the secretary of every club and writes the most beautiful minutes. She wouldn't save any motions on her poetry after her sad experience, but she saved thousands on the reports of the Motion Study Club. She couldn't

read them, and nobody else could, either; but nobody dared to complain.

The most interesting experiment of all was with Mabel Muriel Murphy. Long ere this I have told the gentle reader how messy Mabel Muriel used to be about her clothes, and how, with Sister Edna's help, she reformed and became the neatest girl at St. Catharine's. Since then it has always taken Mabel one full hour to dress or undress. As we are only allowed half an hour, Mabel Muriel had to get up thirty minutes earlier than the rest of us every morning, and go to her room half an hour earlier every night. Thus she missed many pleasant and instructive occasions, including "spreads." Mabel Muriel told me with her own lips that this was often irksome, and when I told her I thought by saving motions she could dress and undress in thirty minutes her face lit up with joy.

The first morning I stole into her room and tried to show her how to save motions, we were both an hour late. You see, we made the motions fewer, but as we had to study each motion a long time before we made it, it wasn't really much saving. Mabel Muriel was interested, though, and bound to keep at it; so the second morning, when she dressed without my help and tried to apply our principles, she was an hour

and a half late, and Sister Edna called her aside and uttered stern reproaches. The third morning Mabel Muriel came into the class-room on time, but her hair was over her left ear, and three buttons on the back of her blouse were unbuttoned, and her placket was open. Sister Edna had to talk to her again, and her experiment could not yet be called a success.

We then watched with fascinated interest a grim contest between science and affection. Mabel Muriel was dreadfully anxious to learn to dress in thirty minutes, and just as anxious to please Sister Edna, who is her Ideal, by looking neat. So sometimes she would be neat and late and sometimes messy and on time, but never neat and early, as she was wont to be ere she took up motion study. It was a terrible thing to watch, for when Mabel Muriel Murphy sets her jaw and goes at anything she keeps at it with awful determination. I tried to stop her, for I felt responsible; but as another Literary Artist says, "I had put in motion forces I could not control." All I could do was to stealthily button Mabel Muriel up the back whenever I got a chance in a class-room.

Was I, all this time, the gentle reader asks, neglecting my dear friends Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom? Nay. But the things that

happened to them are almost too sad to describe. I fain would pass them o'er, but that would not be Art. The true Literary Artist writes of Life as it is, even when he has to plunge his pen into the quivering human heart to do it and write his words with Blood. Therefore, I continue.

In the beginning Mabel and Maudie were not very enthusiastic over the Motion Study Club. They said they thought motion study was silly. But after I had talked to them, and Janet had made a lot of snap-shots when they didn't know it, and I had read some of the man's book to them and told them all about the girl in the box factory, they began to understand. Mabel Blossom still has a way of pulling at her lips and pinching her eyebrows and rubbing her forehead when she is studying, and I added these motions up, "estimated their force," as the man said we must do, and showed Mabel that in the next year she would have wasted billions of motions, not to speak of pulling her face out of shape. I showed, too, that her eyebrows would be gone in about eight years more, and that her mouth would be pulled half-way to her left ear in two years and seven months. You'd better believe that interested—yea, staggered—Mabel Blossom. I also reminded her of the beautiful theory that

no lady lifts her hands to her face or head after she is dressed unless she has to use her handkerchief. At St. Catharine's we are not supposed to do a single thing to our features after the dressing-hour, except to make them reflect what Sister Edna calls "a quick and eager intelligence."

The very morning I talked to her Mabel stopped pulling her mouth, and I pointed out to her at noon that she had saved seventy-three motions. The same morning Maudie had saved one hundred and seventeen motions by not dusting and arranging her desk as usual, but I was not so much gratified with this result. It "left much to be desired," as Sister Irmingarde says about our recitations.

That night we talked about "motion study" and "increased efficiency" until the Great Silence fell, and the more we talked the more enthusiastic Mabel and Maudie got. After this they were the most zealous members of the club, and though I was giving most of my time to it now, and holding meetings every day, Mabel and Maudie did even more than I did, because there were two of them. They did not exactly work with the reliability of a steam-valve, but all the other girls admitted that they certainly showed the joy of a hunting-dog in chasing their dear companions and making them do things.

They wrote down every girl's name in a special book they had, and they took all her measurements, because the author of the book said it was necessary to consider the anatomy of workers. Then they carried the girl off to distant corners in the convent grounds and talked to her long and earnestly. Sometimes the girl was grateful and sometimes she wasn't; but, whether she was or not, Mabel and Maudie clung to her and drilled her in motion study, at first alone and then with other girls. Wherever I looked I could see silent groups of girls making strange, mysterious motions under the trees and along the river-bank, or standing petrified in one spot, because they had made a wrong motion and didn't dare to move for fear of making another. Maudie and Mabel went about looking so busy it seemed almost wicked to speak to them. They had a plan of their own and were working it up in secret. Little did I wot, alas! what it would prove to be.

All this time I was so busy myself I didn't have a minute to study my lessons. Usually I can get them by reading them over once, but now I didn't even have time to do that. There was always some girl standing around waiting to tell me how she had cut down her motions from six thousand seven hundred and eight

every day to five hundred and twenty-two, and asking how she could do even better; and it was simply wonderful to watch her go through the few motions that were left and then tell her how many she could drop. I got eight girls down to sixty-nine a day, but they weren't really graceful over them. And when Sister Edna called them before her and asked if it was indolence or paralysis that ailed them, they all cried and blamed me.

It was a whole week before I noticed how different things seemed at St. Catharine's. I had been so busy I hadn't really paid much attention to the girls when we were together; I was more interested in working with them alone or in little groups. But finally I noticed that they didn't seem exactly natural. They stopped waving their hands to one another when they met on the campus, and they did their studying standing up to save the motion of sitting down, and Mabel Blossom went about with a fixed look of awful anxiety on her face because she was afraid she would waste a movement of the lips in smiling. The girls spent all their spare time telling one another how they saved motions, and ever and anon Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce drilled them in something new.

This was the way things were when Mother

Mary Caroline came to visit St. Catharine's. Mother Mary Caroline is the head of our whole convent Order. She spends her time traveling from one of her convents to another and giving the Sisters and the House Superiors advice. She comes to St. Catharine's about once a year. It is always a great occasion, and we have a special entertainment for her. She is old—as much as fifty, I should think—and thin, and she has a face like a white rose that has faded, and brown eyes that always look tired. But she is very gracious and dignified, and she acts like what she is—a Frenchwoman with noble blood flowing through her veins. Her nuns are devoted to her, and count the months till she comes. Every girl at St. Catharine's is on her best behavior when Mother Mary Caroline is within the convent walls. I have to explain all this so the gentle reader will realize how embarrassing was the thing that happened.

One Saturday morning while we were entering the refectory the word ran along the lines that Reverend Mother Mary Caroline had arrived the night before, and would see us in the study-hall as soon as we had finished breakfast. The girls were excited, but Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce were the worst of all. They rushed up and down the lines whispering to their

friends, which, of course, was against the rules. I remember wondering what they were saying and wishing they would hurry and tell me; and then I noticed that most of the girls looked a little scared. I decided I would keep out of it, whatever it was, and I pretended I had forgotten something and went to my room. When I got back the girls were seated, and talking was not allowed after that. I didn't really think much about what they had been whispering, for the night before I had thought of a way to do my hair with three motions, and I had tried it that morning, and I wanted to know how they liked it. I was just crazy for a chance to ask them, especially as I was afraid the hair would fall down before my chance came.

There wasn't time to ask more than two or three of them, though, for we went straight from the refectory to the study-hall, and we are not allowed to speak after we have crossed its threshold. I went to my favorite desk at the back of the hall—the last seat of the middle row. I like it because when I sit there I can see the whole room and what all the girls are doing, and I can look, too, at Sister Irmingarde, who is down at the front in a direct line from me. That is why I saw so plainly the unusual incidents that now took place.

The room was strangely quiet. It always is quiet, but usually one hears the rustling of pages as we turn the leaves of our books, or the shuffling of the girls' feet. But motion study had stopped most of that the week before, and now the girls hardly seemed to breathe. Sister Irmingarde raised her head and looked slowly around the room, and as she looked I saw her catch her lower lip between her teeth for an instant, the way she does when she is puzzled. If she meant to speak, she didn't have time, for the door opened suddenly and Mother Mary Caroline came in with Mother Emily, the House Superior, by her side. Every girl rose to her feet as if some one had touched a spring in her. They are used to that, and always do it pretty well. If we were all in our graves we'd rise from force of habit if Mother Mary Caroline entered the cemetery. But this morning those eighty girls got up like one girl rising. Then, instead of settling back comfortably into their seats when Mother Emily gave the signal, they sat down again with a bang that shook the room. You see, they had let themselves drop to save bending their knees. After that not one foot slipped! Not one single hand or head moved! They sat like eighty stone images, looking straight ahead.

I was a little behind the rest, for I hadn't

THEY LET THEMSELVES DROP TO SAVE BENDING THEIR KNEES

known what was coming. But I sat as still as they did, for I saw now why Mabel and Maudie had been drilling the girls so much.

Reverend Mother looked surprised, and Sister Irmingarde's eyes narrowed a little and took on a queer, watchful expression. Then she struck her bell sharply, as a signal that books could be opened, for she and Mother Emily and Mother Mary Caroline always have a little low-voiced chat before they pay much attention to us. She had stood up, too, when Reverend Mother came in, and had given the visitors chairs. Now, as she struck the bell, the right hand of every girl went toward her book like a piston-rod and drew it toward her, and the left hand went forward and opened it; and the head of every girl bent at the same angle over the page of every book and stayed there. It was done exactly as if they were all parts of a big machine, but without a sound.

We stayed that way for five minutes. I don't believe a single girl moved a single muscle, and when you remember that there were eighty girls and more than four thousand muscles, you'd better believe it was a strain to see them all, as it were, in disuse. I never felt so odd in my life.

Mother Mary Caroline rose, and again every

girl rose with her. There was a swish of skirts as they stood, and another bang as they dropped when she motioned them to sit. That was all, but now every eye was fixed with a glassy stare on Mother Caroline's face.

I don't know what she thought of us. She didn't make any sign, except to glance once at Sister Irmingarde's white face and then look away. She talked to those eighty graven images for a few minutes, the way she always did, and when she stopped the eighty girls brought their hands together just once—in one great clap. I don't know what kept me from clapping right along, as we had always done. I suppose it was instinct—or terror; for now Sister Irmingarde had started to her feet, and her face was scarlet up to the edge of the white band that covered her brow. I saw Mother Caroline touch her on the arm, and Sister Irmingarde stood still, and the flush faded slowly from her face.

Mother Caroline spoke to us very quietly.

"Young ladies," she said, "you may resume your work."

At that every right hand in the room reached out, opened an ink-well, grasped a pen from the pen-rack on each desk, and put it into the ink. Then every right hand drew back. At the same time every left hand pushed a pad of writ-

ing-paper into position, and every head bent above the pad. Next every hand seized a blotter, blotted a page, and turned it over, while every right hand went on writing. It was a wonderful, almost a terrible sight. No one can imagine how queer it made me feel. I stared until my eyes bulged out of my head, and while I was staring Sister Irmingarde came quietly down the center aisle and stood beside me.

"May," she said, in a voice so low I could hardly hear her, "what does this mean? Is it some of your work?"

I stood up and tried to speak, but I couldn't tell her exactly why they were doing it, and she must have seen by my face that I couldn't. And I didn't know what to say, for I couldn't clear myself and desert my dear companions if they were going to have trouble. She stood looking at me for a minute, and her great brown eyes burned in her white face like a live coal among ashes. (Please notice that about the coal and the ashes, and ask yourself if any one else would have thought of it at such a moment.)

Suddenly the girl who sat across the aisle from me giggled—a dreadfully frightened giggle—and a girl near her giggled, too.

Sister Irmingarde spoke again then, in a tone we had never heard her use before. I will make

another comparison here, as this is a good place. Her voice sounded like a convent bell ringing out over a frozen lake at five o'clock on a dreadfully cold winter morning.

"Silence!" she said. And there was silence. Then she added, "Miss Blossom, possibly you can explain this extraordinary performance."

Mabel Blossom stood up, pale but calm.

"Yes, Sister," she said, in clear, ringing tones, "I can. It's 'increased efficiency.' It means that we have reduced the motions of our study hour from eight hundred and four to seventeen, and we wanted to show you and Mother Caroline how we do it. We wanted to give you a surprise."

Sister Irmingarde looked at her a minute. Then she took her handkerchief out of her flowing sleeve and wiped her brow.

"You have done it," she said, in faint tones. "You have certainly done it."

She walked back to her desk without another word. I looked at Mother Mary Caroline. She had turned her back to the room, but I saw her shoulders shaking, and a terrible weight was lifted from my heart. For the next five minutes Mother Caroline, Mother Emily, and Sister Irmingarde talked in low tones, and their black-veiled heads were very close together. Then Mother Caroline and Mother Emily went away.

After they had gone, Sister Irmingarde sat still for a little while, as if she had had a shock and wanted time to pull herself together. We waited, and I need not tell the gentle reader that we suffered—for it was all too plain that our "surprise" had not been a success. Then Sister Irmingarde began to talk to us. She told us we had "come dangerously near creating an impression of discourtesy toward Reverend Mother," and she warned us against taking up fads and wasting time on experiments we did not understand, and, above all, against taking any "concerted action" without consulting her. She said there had been "a general paralysis of effort" in St. Catharine's during the past week, and she ordered us to make up all the lessons we had lost. Then she swept the room with her beautiful eyes, and smiled her lovely smile—the first since that dreadful half-hour —and we all straightened up again like thirsty plants that have been watered.

"Oh, my girls, my girls," she said, "what *will* you do next?"

Maudie Joyce is sometimes strangely dull. She was now.

"We thought you'd like it, Sister," she said. "Didn't you, *really?*"

Sister Irmingarde wiped her forehead again,

as if even to think of it was too much for her.

"*Like* it!" she said. And she added, "For one horrible moment I thought you had all gone mad—or that *I* had!"

Those words were the death-knell of Motion Study at St. Catharine's.

IX

OUR GROUCHOMETER CLUB

AS Mabel Blossom suggested the experiment I am about to describe, I hasten to give her credit in the first sentence of this chapter. Usually I am the girl in our class who thinks of wonderful things and then makes her vision clear to others, as it were—but I did not think of this one, and you'd better believe I'm glad now that I didn't. It was Mabel. We were all very much surprised by Mabel's being able to think of anything important, but we learned a great deal from it; and Mabel herself was even more helped than we were by the lesson it taught us.

She experienced many emotions also, which I will describe when I get to the right place—and *I* will decide what that place is regardless of Mabel, who is sitting beside me poking me with her pencil and insisting that the place is here and now. Little indeed does poor Mabel

know about art, or about the slow and reverent steps with which the true artist approaches the temple. Why, I can't think of a single famous writer who tells her whole story in her very first paragraph, where Mabel thinks it should be told. This is the proper way to begin, and I hope it will be another lesson to her.

Perhaps the gentle reader has noticed that sometimes the most interesting experiences we have come to us at our dullest moments—that is, they come suddenly, when everything seems dull. After that "life is never the same again," as the poet beautifully expresses it. This is what happened when Mabel Blossom started the Grouchometer Club.

We were in the study-hall one evening in February—twenty girls of our class—all bent over our books and dreadfully bored by them, of course, but keeping on because there wasn't anything else to do. Sister Irmingarde was not in the room, and that made things even worse. When she is with us I can always pass the time pleasantly, when my lessons are not interesting, by looking at her and wondering why she entered the convent and what she's really thinking of when she sits with her eyes on her book and her thoughts, I wot, a million miles away. We know that when she was "out in the world"—

that is, before she entered the convent—she belonged to a very good family and lived in Europe a long time, and even studied art for a year or two in Paris, while she was wrestling with the grim and terrible problem of what life really means.

That's all we know—but beginning with it I can speculate about her for hours. Who were her dear companions? Which of those she loved did she love most? Does she ever think of them now? But I don't waste much time over *that*, for I'm sure she does. When she is describing something to us she has a trick of painting in the air with her thumb. As I watch her do it the class-room seems to fade away, and I can 'most see the big studio in the Colorossi, and her easel, and queer-looking students crowding round to argue over her work. But when I try to picture *her* there I can't do it. It is never a girl who comes before me; always a tall, black-veiled nun, with her crucifix at her side and her silver cross above her heart. The nun frightens the others away; the imaginary companions with their tousled hair and their queer clothes shrink into the background like vanishing shadows, and everything grows dark, and I'm sitting in the study-hall again, and I realize that I don't know a thing about Sister Irmingarde and probably never will.

But I am drifting from my narrative. I will recall myself to it after expressing one more thought which has come to me and is too good to waste. Sometimes the world seems to me like a big library, where other human beings are books. I look at some of the books long enough to read the titles and decide that I don't want to read more. I open others and read them almost at a glance—as if they were primers. Often I read a book through and am dreadfully disappointed in it, but sometimes I read one with interest and pleasure. Then once in a long, long time I see a fascinating book, beautifully bound, and I grasp it with trembling hands and open it with a long breath of delight—and find that it is printed in a language I don't know and can never understand. Such a book is Sister Irmingarde.

Isn't the way I have put that simply beautiful? The strangest thing about it is that I didn't have it in my note-book. It just dripped off my pen.

I will now return to Mabel—and it's high time I did. All this time she has been prodding me in the side with that pencil and reminding me that I am writing one of our experiences for my book, and not an ode to Sister Irmingarde. Mabel says that when I write with a rapt expression

she always knows I am writing about Sister Irmingarde, for when I am writing of anything else my mien is cold, detached, and almost stern. I am letting Mabel hold the ink while I write to-day. It is little enough to do for her in her sorrow and remorse.

Return with me now, gentle reader, to the study-hall in which the girls of our set were sitting with their reluctant eyes upon their books. Suddenly the voice of Mabel Blossom broke the silence. (Mabel thinks I ought to make this paragraph the real beginning of this chapter, and strike out all the rest. Little does she wot, poor worm, that the rest is atmosphere and has to be.)

When Mabel's thrilling tones had broken the silence of our cloister class-room Mabel went on to say she had received a letter from her mother that day telling about a wonderful experiment people were making in Paris. (Mabel's mother is living in Paris this winter.) She told Mabel the fad of the moment there was the *grouchomètre*—which we might call in English the *grouchometer*. She said the grouchometer was a list of dreadful things that *might* happen to one, and that the men and women in Paris society were drawing up these lists beforehand, and then comparing them at the end of a few

months with what actually *did* happen, and finding that nine times out of ten the things that really happened were not on their lists at all! So French philosophers said this proved that the things that did happen didn't really amount to anything, because "no thought had been given them or apprehension felt over them in calm, reflective moments." They said it just that way.

Mabel's mother added that if a misfortune on the list *did* happen the philosophers said there was less reason than ever to worry, because one had expected it and had been prepared for it. She said all the French men and women she knew were making up grouchometer lists, and the newspapers were giving prizes for the best ones. A woman she knew had won a prize with a list Mrs. Blossom sent to Mabel. Mabel read off all the items, and the girls copied them as fast as she read them:

1. Loss of a loved one.
2. Betrayal of love.
3. Betrayal of trust.
4. Financial losses.
5. Illness.
6. Exile from home.
7. Loneliness.
8. Thwarted ambition.

9. To feel humiliated.

10. To be compelled to live with unsympathetic persons.

11. Deprivation of personal liberty.

12. To be ordered to undergo a cure for obesity.

Kittie James groaned when the last one was reached, but she needn't have. Every girl there knew the lovely, easy time Kittie had getting thin with my help. Mabel waited for Kittie to get through groaning; it took quite a long time. Then Mabel said she thought it would be a beautiful plan to write out some grouchometer lists of our own without delay and wait and see if any of the things happened to us. All the girls liked the idea—principally, I think, because it gave them an excuse to drop their books. We made the lists that very hour and compared them in the evening; and it was fascinating to see how much alike some were and how different others were. We saw right off, too, how easy it made life. For, of course, if you think of all the very *worst* things that could happen and then they don't happen you have cause for joy. And if they do happen you're all ready for them, just as the French say. Every blessed girl in the class began her grouchometer list with the same sentence:

1. To fail in the final examinations.

This does not mean that all the girls are eager students, either, as a thoughtless reader might infer. It is a strange fact that even the girls who hate books most hate failure at examinations more. This is partly because the nuns look so grieved, but principally, I think, because the girls who pass look so superior. Even Kittie James put it first on her list, and when she read it out in trembling tones we all laughed, which was rude and unkind and hurt the dear child's feelings. But it *was* funny, for Kittie has been drinking at St. Catharine's fountain of knowledge for three years and has failed in every single examination she has ever had except one. In that one she succeeded, with the help of the whole school—an event I have described in my other book.

When we had stopped laughing Kittie remarked that, after all, the French were perfectly right about things not mattering when the mind was prepared for them. She knew, because her mind was always prepared for not passing examinations, so it never really worried her when she failed. She had put it on her list, she said, because she couldn't think of anything else that would worry her, either; and she added that if she could only get Sister Irmingarde to prepare

her mind, too, so *she* wouldn't be surprised and grieved when Kittie failed, it would be a comfort.

That gave Mabel her idea and she shared it with her dear companions without delay. She said she thought it would be simply great to get up a grouchometer list for Sister Irmingarde, putting down all the things that might happen to her. Then, if the things did happen, Sister Irmingarde would be prepared and cheerful about them, and if they didn't she would have lots to be thankful for. You can see what a lovely idea this was. The girls shrieked with delight over it, and turned admiring eyes on Mabel, and then reached for fresh sheets of paper so they could make up Sister Irmingade's grouchometer list without a moment's delay. For half an hour nothing was heard in the study-hall but the scratching of our busy pens. Once Sister Harmona opened the door and glanced in at us and withdrew with a peaceful smile. She thought we were making notes of our studies. (Sister Irmingarde would have known better.)

After every girl had finished her list we compared them and got up the final list by taking the most helpful lines from all the others. At the end this was Sister Irmingarde's grouchometer:

1. To have the whole class fail in the spring examinations. (With her mind used to this misfortune, you can see what a comfort it would be to Sister Irmingarde to have only half the class fail. If half the class failed, though, when she expected only a few girls to—but Mabel Blossom says she is perfectly sure Sister Irmingarde would say I need not "develop this thought.")

2. To have us try some new experiment, like our Beauty Culture Club and the Motion Study Club. (We knew we were sure to do it, and it seemed a good opportunity to get Sister Irmingarde's mind in "a receptive state.")

3. Loss of Mabel Blossom's love. (Mabel wrote that on her own list and made us put it on the final one. She said while we were writing down terrible calamities we might as well put in the worst, especially as the whole thing was her idea. We put it in to please her, but it reminded me of the most terrible thing of all, so I put that right at the head of my own private list: *To have Sister Irmingarde laugh at me.*)

4. To have us all lose our love for St. Catharine's after we graduated. (That was Adeline Thurston's idea. We wrote it down, but the girls didn't like it very much. It didn't "carry conviction," as real writers say. Finally Mabel

Blossom suggested that we cross it out and substitute this one:

4. To have us become nuns and live with her always. (We knew that was a fine one, and long afterward Sister Edna told Mabel Muriel Murphy with her own lips that Sister Irmingarde had turned pale when she read it.)

5. To have Kittie James get fatter. (That was Mabel's idea, too. Kittie didn't like it, of course, but, as we pointed out to her, we had to prepare Sister Irmingarde's mind for the way Kittie would probably look in a few months.)

6. To have every girl in our class receive a box from home the same day. (We knew this would prepare her for having half of us get boxes at Easter.)

7. To have us all break down from overwork. (Mabel thought that ought to go first on the list, so that if we didn't do any work at all Sister would be glad and grateful; but I thought it was wiser to drop in the idea unobtrusively, and the other girls agreed with me—so we left it No. 7.)

8. To be the heroine of May Iverson's first novel. (I think that was silly, for I never write of any heroine until I have probed her heart to its very core, and full well I wot I'll never get a chance to probe Sister Irmingarde's. But the girls insisted, so that line stayed.)

9. To lose her love for us. (This last one was very hard to decide on. Some girls had written *To lose her beauty* and they thought that was better. Mabel Muriel Murphy, who is very devout, had written *To lose her faith*—but she scratched it out quickly when she met our horrified eyes. Finally we all agreed on Maudie Joyce's line, *To lose her love for us.* For, of course, if she ceased to love us, but had to keep on teaching us, it might be a strain.)

Then the list was ready and we looked at Mabel Blossom and waited for her to tell us what to do next.

Mabel did it. She said we must make a copy of the grouchometer in our best handwriting—which is Adeline Thurston's—and send it to Sister Irmingarde that very evening with Mrs. Blossom's letter, so Sister would know what it meant. We all agreed to that except Adeline Thurston, who had to do the work. She said her hand was tired. But we showed her how selfish she was, and at last she copied the list and we put it and the letter into a large envelope.

While we were wondering how to get it to Sister Irmingarde, who might be in any one of dozens of places in the great convent buildings, Sister Edna came into the study-hall and sat down at Sister Irmingarde's desk. We gave

the envelope to Mabel Muriel, with signs that she was to take it up and ask Sister Edna to do us the great favor of having it delivered that evening.

Sister hesitated a moment after Mabel Muriel spoke and looked as if she meant to ask some questions. Then, as Mabel Muriel maintained a dignified silence, Sister bowed and said she would deliver the letter with pleasure. By that time the study-hour was over, so she sent us to our own rooms. The other events of the evening, such as eating a little nourishing fudge and saying our prayers and going to bed, have nothing to do with this narrative—though Mabel Blossom says she is surprised indeed that I do not pause here to describe them.

What I will describe instead is the strange effect the Grouchometer Club had on my dear companions. As the days passed it led them to what Mabel Blossom calls "an excess of girlish abandon." They seemed to think they could risk doing everything that entered their heads simply because it was, or was not, on their grouchometer lists. They said their minds were prepared for anything and that nothing mattered, anyway, because French philosophers said so. Mabel Blossom was the worst of all—for of course she could put the blame on her mother if sad things happened.

Sad things began to happen right off. As a beginning all the girls stopped studying. Kittie James started a new club—The Butterflies—"Organized solely for the Pursuit of Pleasure." The first rule of the club was that any member of the Butterflies who made an intelligent remark, or even one she thought was intelligent, was fined five cents. Kittie James told me with her own lips that the treasurer didn't collect enough to buy a bottle of olives. The Butterflies made things very gay. They had a spread 'most every night in Kittie's room and Kittie gained seven pounds in one week. Of course she didn't care as long as our minds were prepared for it. But the infirmarians didn't know anything about the grouchometer, so *their* minds were not prepared; and they were shocked and grieved when Kittie was borne to the infirmary again and had to stay there two days. The Butterflies went right on celebrating, however, and when they were not having spreads they were having headaches and wandering o'er the campus with dull, glazed eyes and their hands to their brows.

The gentle reader must not think from these sad facts that all the girls joined the Butterflies. Nay, there were noble souls among us with high ideals. I was one of them and Adeline Thurston

was another. Both Adeline and I had long thought that our brains were being overtaxed by study and that we had been neglecting our art. I hope the gentle reader knows by this time that our art is literature—mine prose and Adeline's poetry. So we stopped studying and wrote and wrote and wrote. I wrote four stories in one week and Adeline wrote nine poems. And we wandered by the riverside and read our works to each other and had perfectly beautiful times except when we were in class, when it was sometimes embarrassing not to know our lessons. We tried to start interesting discussions and things like that in class and it worked with some of the Sisters, especially Sister Harmona. We can always start her on the subject of Paris *vs.* Touraine pronunciation, and she will run on peacefully till the lesson half-hour is over. But it is a strange and interesting fact that we can never lead Sister Irmingarde into other fields of thought unless she wants to go; and when she does go she always knows she is there and takes us with her and makes us think as hard and study as much there as anywhere else.

The Grouchometer Club and the Butterfly Club had been celebrating 'most a week before I noticed something queer about Sister Irmingarde. When I did it wasn't really anything I

could tell the girls about, for I didn't exactly understand what it meant myself. It was nothing that Sister Irmingarde did or said; it was principally her manner that was different. The only way I can describe her manner is to say that she acted as if she had gone inside of herself and closed the door and wouldn't be at home if one rapped.

I spoke to Kittie James about it and asked her if she had noticed it, but Kittie only stared and said she hadn't. That didn't mean much, though, for Kittie was not an observant girl at any time, and after three weeks of celebration with the Butterflies, with visits to the infirmary thrown in between, she wouldn't notice anything, anyway. The next person I spoke to was Adeline Thurston, but Adeline was so absorbed in a new poem that she didn't even hear the question, and after asking it three times in one evening I gave up. Then I asked Maudie Joyce if she had noticed anything, and she said she had noticed that Sister Irmingarde seemed "detached."

Maudie is always using that word. She read somewhere about some one who lived a life "detached from her kind" and she never gets tired quoting it. So she would probably have said it about Sister Irmingarde whether it fitted

or not, but the strange thing about it was that it did fit Sister Irmingarde perfectly.

Maudie went on to say that she thought Sister was "detached" because she was so busy getting ready for our "exhibition" exercises in June. For we were to have an unusually elaborate program, though I have forgotten to say anything about it until now. There are always a thousand things for the Sisters to do before Commencement, so I thought Maudie might be right for once. Certainly Sister Irmingarde seemed far more busy about other things than about us. She was away from us more than half the time, and she always seemed to be talking to other Sisters and forgetting that we were there. If such a thing could be even hinted about Sister Irmingarde, I might say she almost neglected us. She let us recite 'most any way we pleased, and she never seemed to see the red eyes and headachy looks of the Butterflies, nor the pounds and pounds that were putting themselves on Kittie James's form before our horrified eyes.

This went on for two weeks—and the longer it went on the less I understood it. I got very much interested indeed and watched Sister Irmingarde with wide, intelligent eyes. But all I could see was that once or twice *her* eyes narrowed as she looked at us, as they do when she

is thinking of something special, and ever and anon she smiled to herself in a queer little way, as if she knew something we didn't know. Without understanding just why, I began to feel as if we were like the Italians who live on the sides of Vesuvius and sing and dance in their vineyards regardless of the crater boiling within and getting ready to blow them up. We were exactly like that, too, as it happened; so the gentle reader can see again how wonderful is the intuition of the Literary Artist.

Our explosion came with terrible suddenness, just as the upheavals of Vesuvius come. It was on a bright, glad day late in February when the Grouchometer Club and the Butterflies had lasted almost four weeks. The Butterflies had had the biggest spread of all the night before, so the girls of our class were feeling very dull and languid as they strolled along the hall toward Sister Irmingarde's room. But that did not worry them, for they did not expect to do much that morning, anyway, and they knew that by noon they would probably feel better.

Adeline and I had been at the banquet as honored guests and had read our works to the girls, and they had been so lovely and enthusiastic about Adeline's poems and my story that we had both eaten too much afterward to show our

gratitude. So we crawled along with the rest, too sick and tired to talk to one another; but ever and anon some girl groaned and others echoed the groan to show that they felt the same way.

Then suddenly there was a shriek. It was high and wild, in a voice we recognized as no other than that of Kittie James. Another shriek followed it. There was a rush forward, and then perfect silence. I was behind the rest, thinking bitterly of how burnt Kittie's fudge was the night before and how much worse burnt fudge is the next morning than any other kind, but it didn't take me long to reach what newspaper-writers call "the scene of action." When I got there I found the girls of our class standing in front of the class bulletin board as if they had been nailed there and then hypnotized. Their mouths were open, their hands were hanging limply at their sides, and their staring, horrified eyes were fixed on a notice written in Sister Irmingarde's flowing, beautiful handwriting. It was strange and terrible that anything that looked so lovely should fill the human heart with such despair. This is what we read:

The written examinations of the class will begin this morning at ten o'clock and will continue for

three days. The branches covered will be taken up in the order named:

Greek, Latin, Geometry, Physics, Geology, English, French, Mathematics, and Botany.

For a moment we stood there as if we had been turned to stone. Then everybody talked at once. We forgot that the bulletin board was just outside of Sister Irmingarde's class-room, and that she was doubtless there that very minute waiting for us. The noise we made brought her to the door, and when she opened it and stood on the threshold looking at us, with her eyebrows raised and an expression of surprise on her face, our excitement stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and the girls walked into the class-room without a word and sat down at their desks.

When I dared to raise my eyes to Sister Irmingarde's face I saw that she was looking more like herself than she had looked for a long time. She was very quiet, but alert and businesslike, arranging papers on her desk, and making some notes that seemed to be important, for she frowned a little over them as she wrote. Then she raised her beautiful eyes and looked around the room with her own natural, wonderful smile—and I know a good many of the girls felt big lumps in their throats. For that smile

was the smile she always gave us when she expected us to do our very best—just before examinations and during the Commencement exercises, and at other times when she knew we were frightened and needed encouragement.

We had never needed it as much as we did now, but instead of helping us to-day it made us feel worse. We knew that this time she expected what we could not do. We knew that lately every blessed one of us had been dawdling and wasting dozens of school-hours when all of them all these months were leading up to this one examination—the great final examination before we left school. We knew that if we were "conditioned"—that is, if we didn't pass—we could not be promoted; and I think we knew, too, every last one of us, that we were not likely to pass after those silly spreads and all our foolish neglect of our school-work and with our heads aching in the bargain. Besides, the final examinations of our class had never before come in February. They were always in May—'most three months later.

There wasn't a sound in the room. Every girl sat perfectly still, staring down at her desk, on which everything was arranged ready for her to begin—virgin sheets of paper, fresh pens, full ink-bottles, and neat little printed lists of

questions—terrifying questions, worse than they had ever been before, and covering, I thought, every subject I had ever heard of and forgotten. Everything was before us but knowledge. We had to use all these things putting down what we didn't know.

I thought of the grouchometer lists, and even in that terrible hour I curled my lip in scorn, for I had learned that the French philosophers were exactly like the rest of us and didn't know a thing. I could have told them how little the mind is prepared for a terrible calamity when it really happens, even if one has referred to it in a light and jesting way. I felt as if I were dropping from the top to the bottom of the highest building in the world in the fastest elevator ever made. I heard my heart pounding like the engine in a big ship—but all the time my imagination was working harder than it ever worked before. I saw my mother die of grief because I failed and my father ashamed of me and my whole life different because I had not gone on with my class. And I thought of that horrible grouchometer list again and ground my teeth in voiceless agony. When I described my emotions afterward to the other girls they told me they had felt the very same way. You can imagine how easy it was for them to pass an

examination when they were experiencing these strange and terrible emotions.

Finally I remembered that my father was a general and that an Iverson dies fighting if he has to die, so I dipped my pen in the mucilage-bottle and went to work. I heard a few pens scratch around me and a few feet move, and I knew that Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy had begun, too. Kittie James lay where she had fallen, as they say about dead soldiers on the battle-field—and for a minute I 'most envied her. Then I knew by her stifled sobs that she still lived and that "calm, reflective moments" had not prepared her mind for what was happening any more than they had prepared ours.

When things happen in literature that are too terrible to describe real writers put asterisks on the paper and let the reader imagine what those things were. That is what I will do now, drawing a veil over those three days of our agony. One thing I must explain, though. Everybody admitted that there had never before been such a hard examination at St. Catharine's as the one we were having then. We wrote all day and studied half the night, but of course we couldn't make up in three nights of study for weeks of idleness. Finally it was over and what there was

left of us longed to die. The only person who remained perfectly calm and happy was Sister Irmingarde. She seemed to be sustained by a beautiful hope. I don't know where she got it.

For days after the examinations we girls hardly dared to look at each other. Several packed their trunks, to be all ready to start home. The morning of the fourth day after we had turned in our papers we found the bulletin board covered with little notes for members of the class.

One was for me. It told me I had failed in Physics, Geology, and Mathematics. I was not surprised—except at passing in the other things. I thought I had failed in them all. But of course I couldn't pass with three failures. Another note was for Maudie. She had failed in English, Botany, and Greek. Another told Mabel Blossom she had failed in Latin, French, and Physics. Mabel Muriel Murphy had got through in everything but Physics. Kittie James had failed in six studies. To make a long and heartrending story short, no one had passed but the grinds who were not in our set. Not one in our set had passed. All the leaders of the class were conditioned. Not one of us could go up with the class. It was like thirty funerals all at once. It seemed to be worse, because at the funerals the dead don't suffer and we did.

The girls went to their rooms after they had read their notes and more of them began to pack. I decided that I would be a Red Cross nurse and go to the front, in some country where there was war, and nurse soldiers. Mabel Blossom said she was going straight to Paris to tell her mother and her friends what she thought about grouchometer lists. Mabel Muriel Murphy said she guessed she would go to Molokai and spend her few remaining years nursing the lepers. We tried to speak to some of the Sisters about our plans, but they all seemed too busy to talk and strangely uninterested. Sister Irmingarde stayed away from the class-room all day, so we knew the grouchometer list had not prepared her mind, either. We wandered about like lost souls in outer darkness. No one loved us. No one seemed sorry for us. It was almost as if we were wretched shadows.

There was a notice on the bulletin board that afternoon calling us to the study-hall at eight o'clock that evening. We knew what it meant, and all we suffered before was nothing to all we suffered now, as we waited for what we knew was coming.

At the stroke of eight we were in our places and at five minutes past eight Sister Irmingarde came into the room. For a moment she stood

looking at us without speaking, and she had the detached look Maudie Joyce talks about. We couldn't see her very well. All our eyes were full of tears. But suddenly a wonderful light flashed over her face, and she smiled at us the way my sister Grace smiles at her baby when he is yelling for something that isn't good for him. It is a smile with all sorts of things in it—amusement, and sympathy, and understanding, and love—but more love than anything else. As I watched it on Sister Irmingarde's face I seemed for just one minute to see down deep into her beautiful heart. I knew then that she loved us, and that she always would.

Then she spoke to us. It wouldn't have disturbed us much to have a cannon-ball go through the room, or the roof drop in, or any dreadful thing like that happen. The worst thing that could happen had happened. But when Sister Irmingarde spoke in her simple, direct way, in a tone that was a little more matter-of-fact than usual, I fell backward in my seat. For these were her words:

"As you already know, our 'quiz' has been a very sad affair. You have, however, seven weeks in which to get ready for your final examinations. I believe, and I am sure you agree with me, that with hard work—"

That is all I heard. It is all anybody heard. A strange sigh swept over the room, as if every girl had been holding her breath and had suddenly let it go. The next instant the class began to cheer, and kept on cheering till the inkstands rattled. That hideous examination had not been an examination at all! It had been merely a "quiz"—a test—and our marks would not be counted!

Sister Irmingarde let us cheer till we got tired, while she stood still looking at us, with that loving, understanding smile. When we quieted down she gave us the most inspiring talk we had ever had from anyone. I shall not repeat it, but I will give the gentle reader one instance of its effect, because that will be a more artistic climax.

When I went back to my room I passed Kittie James's door, and as I passed I heard Kittie's voice. So I knocked and went in, expecting to find some of the girls of our crowd. But Kittie was alone. She was standing in front of her window and talking to something with such interest that she did not hear me enter. As I drew near I saw that the thing she was addressing was a cream puff—a great, rich, soft one that was resting on the window-sill. I went and stood beside Kittie and looked at it, too, and then

Kittie saw me and explained that she was bidding it farewell forever.

"No more spreads," said Kittie in loud, determined tones; and she threw the cream puff out of the window. "No more fat. No more indolence."

She pinched my arm blue in her excitement, and went on to say that she was going to be a student and make something of her life, as Sister Irmingarde wished us all to do.

I listened, and agreed that she was right. Then Kittie went to her closet and got tins of sardines and glasses of jam and began to throw them out of the window, like an English militant suffragette—except that the suffragette would throw things *in*. But the spirit was the same. When Kittie had thrown them all out she stopped and thought a minute and turned to me with the light of a great thought on her sweet young face.

"Just think," she said in hushed tones. "We made out the grouchometer list for Sister Irmingarde with all sorts of dreadful things in it, and Sister Irmingarde is the only one among us that did *not* have perfectly dreadful things happen to her. What does it mean?"

"It means," said Mabel Blossom, who had opened the door and joined us unobserved,

"that in a contest between Sister Irmingarde and the grouchometer you can lay a wager on Sister Irmingarde, every time!"

And when we thought it over we decided it did mean exactly that!

X

THE SHADOW OF THE ANGEL

ON the morning of the 10th of March I awoke with a strange weight upon my heart. At first I thought it was fudge, for I had eaten a great deal of fudge the night before; but afterward I knew it was a premonition.

At nine o'clock I went to Sister Irmingarde's class-room, where we girls had to discuss current events, and prove that we knew something about them. All the newspapers were full of the McNamara case, and I had a great many thoughts to express about it. Therefore I was dreadfully disappointed when I found Sister Edna and not Sister Irmingarde waiting to take the class. Sister Edna always takes the events class when Sister Irmingarde is called away by Mother Ernesta or to see important visitors; so, though deeply pained, I was not surprised. The class work went on as usual, and I held the girls spellbound, as I often do, by the strange

and interesting things I knew and they hadn't even dreamed of. But I don't think Sister Edna heard much that we said. We all noticed that she was absent-minded; and when the discussion was over, and I had told all I knew and some things besides, she left the room without waiting to point out my worst errors in a confidential chat, as usual.

The next day Sister Irmingarde did not come to her class-room, nor the next, nor the next. By that time we knew, of course, that she was ill, and we decided that she had a little attack of influenza. Some of the girls remembered that she had coughed and looked feverish the last day she was with us. We were too busy to think much about anything, however, for a few days. Everybody wanted us to do things that took every minute of our time, and it seemed to me that seven different nuns were taking Sister Irmingarde's various classes. We were so interested in watching these nuns, and studying them as individuals, and reading their hearts, and talking them over, and deciding that not one of them could compare with Sister Irmingarde in any way, that we did not realize how fast time was passing.

Every morning and evening we asked whether Sister Irmingarde was better, and the answer

was always that she was "comfortable." We sent her our love, too, and every one of us sent her flowers. But it never occurred to us that she was really ill, with doctors and nurses, and medicines and thermometers and fever charts and the other things that go with real sickness. I, for one, went to her class-room every morning expecting to see her there. I always had a little thrill when I opened the door and looked for her, and then a little shock when I saw some one else in her place. Away down inside of me something whispered "another whole day!" After that—though it seems too strange and terrible to be true as I look back on it—my mind would be taken up with other things. And it was the same with all the girls.

But one day, after Sister Irmingarde had been away from us for more than a week, I felt something strange in the convent atmosphere. You know how it is just before a great storm, when nature seems to take a long, deep breath and get ready for what is coming. In one way, everything was the same as usual. Work was going on; the convent bells were reminding us of hours and classes; I saw the nuns in the long halls going about their duties; yet every one seemed to be *listening*. While I was wondering what it meant Sister Edna passed me, walking quickly.

She was looking straight ahead, so she did not see me. Her face had the look I had seen on all the other faces I had met that morning—a strained look, wide-eyed and frightened, as if she expected to hear something dreadful. The sound of my heels on the polished floor of the hall seemed to me to echo through the whole building; I began to walk on tiptoe without knowing why I did it.

When I opened the door of Sister Irmingarde's class-room I think I had begun to understand what it all meant—for this time I did not expect to see her at her desk. She was not there, but our French teacher, Sister Harmona, sat in her place. Her eyes were red, and when she opened a book I saw her hands tremble. The girls were in their seats—Mabel Blossom, Maudie Joyce, Kittie James, and dozens of others—and as I glanced at them, and then away, afraid of what I saw, they all looked alike, for every face had the same expression. They were leaning a little forward. Their eyes were very wide open, and they seemed to be afraid to speak. The same queer hush lay over the room that filled the whole convent.

I went straight to Sister Harmona's desk and spoke to her, but the voice I heard saying the words did not seem to be mine. It was cold

and steady, though I could feel my heart pounding against my side.

"Sister," I said, "please tell us. Is Sister Irmingarde *very* ill?"

Sister Harmona looked at me, and then looked away. She is a plump little nun who makes me think of a fat wren—her eyes are so dark and bright, and she is so quick in all her movements. Usually she is very gay and cheerful. Sometimes I have seen her annoyed or excited over our French verbs, but never sad. So if I could have felt surprised at anything just then, I should have felt surprised to see her brown eyes fill with tears and slowly brim over. I watched the big drops fall, first on her cheeks, then on her white linen guimpe, until she bent her head and fumbled for her handkerchief in her long, flowing sleeve. She tried to speak but cou d not; but it didn't matter, for now we knew the truth. There was not a sound in the room. It seemed to me I stood there for years, watching Sister Harmona's tears falling and fall ng and falling; but after the first minute I don't think I saw them at all. Instead, I saw Sister Irmingarde sitting in her old place. I even thought I heard her beautiful voice.

"Oh, my girls, my girls, what *will* you do next?"

How often she had said that to us, in despair! How much she had done for us! How little we had done for her. As I stood, dazed, I remembered it all. The years seemed to roll backward before my eyes, like moving pictures, but reversed, so that the old school-days came first; and every picture had Sister Irmingarde in it—Sister Irmingarde, who knew everything, and was willing to teach us all that we would learn.

Then the door opened, and Mabel Muriel Murphy came in, crying.

"Oh, girls!" she said, and she dropped into her seat and put her arms down on the desk and buried her face in them, and sobbed. "Oh, girls! Sister Irmingarde is dying!"

The words rolled about the big, quiet room as if they, too, were frightened, and were trying to get out and away from themselves. No one answered them. No one could. I went to my seat and stared out of the window, and tried to be calm and to understand what it all meant. Two of the Minims were rolling their hoops along a path that was too narrow for them both, and I watched the hoops meet and go down. An old gardener was coming toward them wheeling a barrow full of fresh earth for the early flower-beds. I watched him, too, and wondered how these little things could go on

happening when Sister Irmingarde was dying. Finally I heard Sister Harmona speaking.

She was saying that we must not give up hope. Sister Irmingarde had a serious case of pneumonia — a very serious case indeed — and the crisis, to-day, found her extremely weak; but a great specialist had been sent for, and he was doing everything that could be done. We must remember, she said, that the one thing we could do for Sister Irmingarde was to keep steadily at work, as she would wish us to do, and lighten the tasks of her substitutes by helping them in every way. She asked us to pray for Sister Irmingarde—as if she needed to, when we were all doing it, deep in our hearts, that very minute! She turned to her notes then, and began the French lesson, and every girl there set her teeth and resolved to go through that lesson well, if she died doing it. We got through, every one of us; and Sister Harmona was simply wonderful in helping us, and understanding us, and keeping us so busy, at the same time, that we couldn't think. At the end of the lesson she gathered up her notes and turned to us with a little smile that shone dimly through her tears. like a rainbow through a mist.

"How good you are, my children," she said in French. "Some day I will describe this hour

to Sister Irmingarde, and it will make her happy. Adieu. Pray for her."

Then she went away, without another word, and we began to talk to one another, almost in whispers, for her last words had comforted the girls very much.

"Some day I will describe this hour to Sister Irmingarde," she had said, "and it will make her happy."

Surely that sounded as if she thought Sister would get well. But Mabel Muriel Murphy, who is very devout, was sure Sister Harmona merely meant that she would tell Sister Irmingarde when they met in Heaven.

I left them arguing over this when I went to Sister Cecilia's room to take my music lesson. If Sister Irmingarde wanted us to go on as usual while she was dying, I would go on—as long as I could. But what I wanted to do was to sit still and pinch myself until I awoke from my horrible dream.

When I turned into the music-hall I noticed that even here everything seemed unreal. Usually this hall is the noisiest place in the convent, for dozens of little music-rooms open off it, and dozens of girls are practising dozens of different things on dozens of different pianos, and the racket is frightful. But to-day half

the pianos were silent, and the rest were going intermittently, while groups of girls stood on every side, talking under their breath. Even the nuns were stopping to speak to each other —asking a quick question, and then going on with a gesture of despair.

The long, dim hall seemed gloomier than ever before, as if the Angel of Death, hovering over the convent, had covered everything in it with the shadow of his great black wings.

I knew now what the look on all those faces meant. It meant fear. It almost meant terror —and you cannot imagine how strange it seemed to me to see this in a convent, where they think of death as a welcome friend, waiting to open the door of Heaven and let them pass in. A Sister who dies finds her reward a little sooner than the rest, they say. That is all; so why should they grieve for her? But it was different to-day. I wondered why, and yet I knew. It was because Sister Irmingarde herself was different. They all loved her. They all needed her, just as we girls did. They all felt they could not go on without her.

As I dragged my feet down the hall, that seemed a thousand miles long, I caught a few words here and there. Some one said tanks of oxygen had been sent in, and that an-

other great specialist was coming. One Sister told another, with a break in her voice, "I can't imagine St. Catharine's without her. Surely the very walls will fall if Irmingarde goes." And the other answered, brokenly, "She is the bearer of our torch." An Irish lay Sister, who was on her knees polishing the floor, stopped them to ask for news, and after they had answered and passed on she remained on her knees, huddled in a queer little bunch, praying, with her face in her hands and her tears falling between her fingers.

I was at Sister Cecilia's door now, and I opened it and went in with reluctant feet. Sister Cecilia has been my teacher for years, but I have never loved her, though I love her music. The girls say she puts the best of herself into that. Certainly there doesn't seem to be much left to go anywhere else. She teaches only a few of the most advanced pupils, and she wants them to devote every minute to practice. We have a dreadful time making her see that there are other duties at St. Catharine's which require our attention, too—such as our studies. She expects more from Janet Trelawney and from me than from anybody else, and if it were not for Sister Irmingarde she would plant us both on piano-stools, and keep us there until we

graduate and leave school. But when she gets too impossible Sister Irmingarde drops into her room, and they have a little visit, and then Sister Cecilia is lovely and reasonable for weeks.

To-day, after the first minute or two, I was glad I was with her. She is so cold and severe that I would never think of crying on her; and as she never thinks of anything but music I knew she would keep me up to the mark. We greeted each other politely (we are always as formal as if we were meeting at a tea), and I sat down at the piano and began to play the Chopin Nocturne in G Minor, while Sister Cecilia roamed about the room, the way she always does, stopping short when things go wrong, and sometimes breaking into a dreadful little groan if she thinks they are worse than usual. To-day she was very quiet, but I shouldn't have minded if she hadn't been. I forgot her.

The Nocturne fitted into everything else, and at first I didn't mind playing it. Sister Cecilia has a large music-room, with two big windows overlooking the convent garden. I was playing without notes—she always makes us memorize everything for the second lesson on it—and from where I sat I could look out over the garden to the infirmary wing of the convent—the wing where that very hour Sister

I CRUMPLED UP OVER THE KEYBOARD

Irmingarde lay dying. I looked from window to window, and wondered which room she had. Then I decided that I knew, and I seemed to see the room itself, with the great doctors and nurses working over her, fighting death, and nuns praying close beside her.

I was playing the Gregorian chant in the Nocturne by this time, but I didn't realize it until suddenly the *Alleluia* rang out. I had loved that while I was practising it—it's so big and victorious and triumphant; but now, at the first note of it, something in me gave way with a sudden snap, and I stopped playing and crumpled up over the keyboard. How could I play an Alleluia when Sister Irmingarde was dying? How could I ever play or do or be anything again when she was gone?

I felt a hand on my shoulder, and I knew in a vague way that it was Sister Cecilia's. I remembered what Sister Harmona had said about going on with one's work, and I wanted to do it, but I couldn't; and I didn't want to explain to Sister Cecilia, for I felt sure she wouldn't understand. But I heard myself saying, "To have Sister Irmingarde die is the one thing I can't bear—I simply *can't* bear it." And something inside of me went on saying over and over again, as if it were a bit of machinery wound up

to go forever, "I can't bear it. I can't bear it. I can't bear it."

Sister Cecilia moved away from me and crossed the room. For a long time she did not speak, and I was glad, for it gave me a chance to pull myself together. When she did her voice was so strange that I sat up and looked at her. She was staring out of the window toward the infirmary, and her face had the look every face in St. Catharine's had that day.

"Can't *bear* it," she said. And she added, slowly, "I think that is the way we all feel."

She stood for a moment longer, looking toward the infirmary. When she spoke again I knew she had forgotten me and was thinking aloud.

"We took her," she said, "as we take everything—as if the wonder of her, the miracle of having her with us, was no more than our due. We had a genius here, and we harnessed her to the plough. We have killed her among us—God forgive us!"

Then her eyes fell on me, and she remembered, and crossed the room and caught me by the shoulders as if she wanted to shake me.

"Are you blind, too," she asked, "you little geese in her classes? Or do you know what you have had in her? If you do—if even one or two of you have the faintest glimmer of it in your

foolish heads—you will carry her inspiration as a wonderful thing throughout your lives, and she will not have died in vain."

She looked toward the infirmary wing again—a long look, as if she were saying good-by. Then she pulled down the window-shade, and turned toward me with her usual manner.

"Go to your room," she said, brusquely. "You're not up to music. Go to your room—and pray for her."

I went, and when I closed the door I heard the key turn in the lock. I had never known she cared so much for Sister Irmingarde I am sure Sister Irmingarde herself did not know it—nor how all the girls loved her, and the little children, too. Perhaps we never would have understood if she had gone on year after year, doing wonderful things for every one in her wonderful way, that made us take them as natu ally as we took the sunshine or the air we breathed.

No message came to us that day, but the sound we dreaded most we did not hear—the slow tolling of the chapel bell, that follows the death of a Sister. I knew now it was listening for this that made the nuns look so strange.

All that night I lay awake, looking into the darkness and thinking of the room in the infirmary. The storm that had been threatening

since morning broke at midnight, with thunder and lightning and heavy rain. The wind wailed around the windows like the "Dies Iræ" in the Manzoni Requiem. I could almost hear the words:

"Dies Iræ, dies illa,
Solvet sæclum in favilla.
Teste David cum sybilla."

About two o'clock in the morning Maudie Joyce came to my room and crept in bed with me, and a little later Mabel Blossom came, too. They said they were too nervous and unhappy to be alone, and that the storm frightened them. We didn't talk much, but when the lightning flashed I could see that their eyes were open. I heard them slip away a little before morning, but I was too wretched to speak to them.

Day came at last. The five o'clock rising bell for the Community rang first, and then the bell for mass, and finally I heard the voices of the nuns singing in the chapel. I wondered how they could sing. But of course they had to. Then the sun rose. I wondered how it could rise. But of course it had to, too. But I couldn't bear seeing it shining in at my windows when Sister Irmingarde was dying. The lay Sisters were polishing the waxed floors of the

hall as I went to breakfast—but I didn't wonder over that. I knew now how wise it was to work every blessed minute, and I made out a programme then and there that would keep me busy till bedtime.

As I turned a corner into the refectory hall I met Sister Edna. The moment I looked at her face I knew she had good news. It was perfectly quiet and serene—as if she had fastened on again a mask she had dropped for a day or two. But her eyes shone like little lamps under the white band across her forehead. She didn't wait for me to speak.

"Yes, she is better, May," she said, and her voice was like the soft notes of a silver trumpet. "*She's better!*" The crisis is past. The doctors say she will live!"

I have heard some wonderful music, and I expect to hear more, but never anything so beautiful as Sister Edna's words. I felt like singing them, and shouting them, and calling to the world to stop and listen to them. Sister Irmingarde was better! Sister Irmingarde was going to live! It seemed as if the whole universe must know such news and be thrilled by it. She was coming back to us, and we could go on living and working and being happy in the old way. No—not in the old way—I didn't mean

that; in better ways we had thought about and prayed for when we thought she was slipping away from us. We did not deserve it, but we were to have another chance. Sister Irmingarde would live!

That night we girls met in my room. We were so happy that it almost hurt. We made more noble resolutions in half an hour than we could carry out if we gave all our days to them for twenty years. At last we were tired out from talking at once, so we sat quiet for a minute. Then Mabel Blossom said, softly, "I wonder what we would have done if she had died."

We glared at Mabel. It is horrible to have a cold chill run down one's spine in the midst of perfect happiness. Kittie James said she thought we would have died, too. But Maudie Joyce shook her head.

"People don't, usually," she said. "They want to, but they don't. They have to go right on living. Mother said when my brother died that that was the hardest part of it—having to go on living."

The girls shivered.

"God wouldn't let such a thing happen to us," Mabel Muriel Murphy said.

Maudie Joyce looked thoughtful.

"He does sometimes," she said. "He didn't

this time, but He will some time, you know. Dreadful sorrows come to people when they grow older. Some of them may come to us. I feel as if we had learned a great deal the last few days, but I'm not sure just what it is."

She sat still for a moment, as if she had looked into the future and caught a glimpse of strange and terrible things life held for her. "I wonder if we can bear our sorrows when they come," she added.

"We'll be given strength," said Mabel Blossom primly.

"Through prayer," added Mabel Muriel Murphy, devoutly.

"What do you say, May?" asked Maudie. "What am I trying to get hold of that I can't think out?"

I thought a little while, and then a light broke upon me, for I remembered Sister Cecilia's words.

"Troubles will come," I said, "and we will bear them—because we'll have to. That's why people bear them. But I think we'll bear them better because we are Sister Irmingarde's girls. We haven't lost her this time, but we must some day. In one way we will lose her when we leave school. But we can take into the world what she has taught us, and we'll always have the memory

of her. It will be a kind of shield, such as knights wore in battle, and as long as we wear it over our hearts nothing can hurt us much."

"That's it," said Maudie. "Only I couldn't find the words. We have learned that she has given us a shield and that it is—"

"Inspiration," I said.

"Religion," Mabel Muriel Murphy said.

"Courage," Mabel Blossom said.

"Sympathy and understanding and charity," Maudie Joyce said.

"Love, too," Kittie James said, timidly. And I was glad. For I saw that after all we did know, every one of us, what Sister Irmingarde had been giving us all the years we were with her.

But by this time Mabel Blossom had listened to as much serious conversation as her frivolous spirit could bear. She yawned a terrible yawn, and brought down the heel of her slipper on the table before her, first taking the precaution to remove the slipper from her foot.

"Let's go to bed, May," she said, when she had gained what Sister Irmingarde calls "our unwilling attention." "Our guests want to go home!"

THE END

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